

3 Humidity in Kuwait forecast to subside in three days



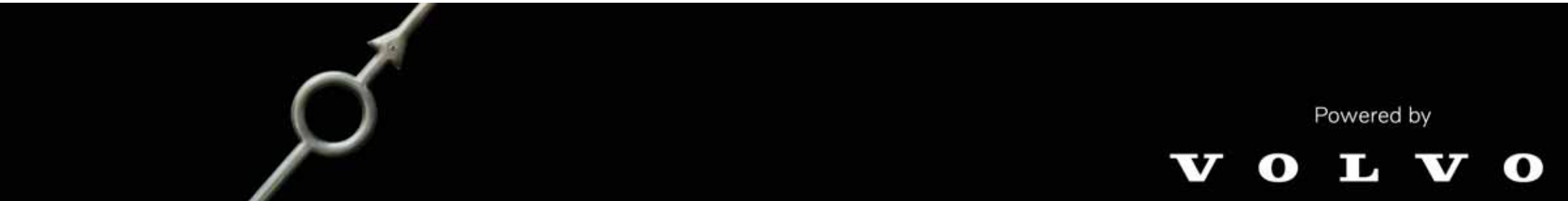
6 Deadly heatwave slams Canada, US



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# MPs criticize decision to deport resident for expressing opinion

Assembly special session cancelled due to govt no-show



By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition lawmakers and local activists yesterday strongly criticized a decision by the interior ministry to deport a 25-year-old Jordanian resident for taking part in a gathering to protest against banning unvaccinated people from entering malls.

During the gathering held a few days ago at Irada Square, Abdullah Jebara spoke to local TV stations and gently criticized the decision barring unvaccinated people from entering malls. MP Thamer Al-Suwait described the decision as “unacceptable racist practices” and called for subjecting the deportation of legal residents to courts instead of leaving it to the discretion of security authorities.

MP Obaid Al-Wasmi said that “deporting a foreigner for merely expressing opinion related to his natural right as a human is illegal and inhuman.” MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari warned that “freedom of expression is guaranteed under the Kuwaiti constitution” and this should not be applied based on nationality. Several other members of parliament and social media activists also rejected the interior ministry’s decision and called for subjecting deportations to the rule of the law.

But MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji supported the decision, saying what Jebara did was not an act of freedom of expression but a violation of the law. He called on authorities to strike hard. Also, former MP Safa Al-Hashem backed the interior minister in his decision and said that allowing residents to express opinions publicly should be rejected.

Earlier in the week, another resident, an Egyptian national, was arrested and deported by security forces for insulting Kuwait in a social media post on dust-storms in Kuwait.

In other news, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday cancelled the Assembly’s special session due to a no-show by government ministers.

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News in brief

Lebanon approves ration card

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s parliament yesterday approved ration cards for the poorest to cushion the gradual collapse of subsidies due to the economic crisis, though officials still need to secure funding for the scheme. The decision came one day after authorities hiked the price of subsidized fuel to shore up dwindling foreign currency reserves at the central bank. The government, which subsidizes key commodities including flour and medicine, has also started to gradually reduce support on other key items, after months of deliberations and without any official announcement. — AFP

Algeria finance minister named new premier

ALGIERS: Algerian Finance Minister Aimene Benabderrahmane was named prime minister yesterday, the presidency said, following legislative elections earlier this month and as the country seeks to curb a deep socio-economic crisis.

“Aimene Benabderrahmane has been appointed prime minister and charged with carrying on consul-

tations with political parties and civil society to form a government as soon as possible,” the presidency said in a statement. Benabderrahmane, 60, replaces Abdelaziz Djerad, who had held the post since late 2019 and presented his government’s resignation last week, following early parliamentary elections held on June 12. Djerad’s government had been unable to redress the country’s economic crisis.

Africa’s fourth-largest economy is heavily dependent on oil revenues, which have slumped in the face of the global economic slowdown. Unemployment stands at more than 12 percent, according to World Bank figures. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, who had previously expressed dissatisfaction with Djerad and his cabinet, thanked him for leading the government “during difficult conditions”, particularly the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Also yesterday, Algeria’s main Islamist party the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP), which came third in the vote with 65 seats in the 407-seat legislature, said it would not be part of a new government. The country’s incumbent National Liberation Front (FLN) won the most seats in the June 12 vote that saw just 23 percent voter participation.

Continued on Page 2

TikTok removes 7m underage users

WASHINGTON: TikTok removed more than seven million accounts of users suspected of being under age 13 in the first three months of 2021, the popular social media operator said yesterday in a transparency report. The Chinese-owned app which is wildly popular with young smartphone users, also said it took down nearly 62 million videos in the first quarter for violating community standards — including for “hateful” content, nudity, harassment or safety for minors. In its first disclosure on underage users, TikTok said it uses a variety of methods, including a safety moderation team, that monitors accounts where users are suspected of being untruthful about their age. — AFP

Will US-Iran tensions flare again in Iraq?

BAGHDAD: This week’s deadly US air strikes on pro-Iranian armed groups in Iraq and Syria sparked fears of a new escalation between the rivals. Even as they hope to revive a 2015 deal over Iran’s nuclear program scuppered by former US president Donald Trump, are Washington and Tehran risking an explosive new confrontation?

Iran has bitterly opposed American influence in the region since its 1979 revolution, which toppled the US-backed Shah and installed an Islamic republic. A

long-running hostage crisis at the American embassy in Tehran and Washington’s support for Iraq in its grueling eight-year war with Iran cemented their rivalry. The United States fears Iran could seek to build a nuclear weapon, a charge Tehran denies.

The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, which toppled Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein, led to massive Iranian influence in Iraqi politics via Shiite parties and armed groups. The invasion also sparked years of sectarian violence in the country, culminating with the rise of the Islamic State group in 2014.

IS was defeated by a US-led coalition working with Iraqi forces including the Hashed Al-Shaabi, a paramilitary coalition dominated by pro-Iran groups. But their uneasy alliance ended

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Syrian teen sentenced in Norway

OSLO: A Norwegian court has sentenced a 16-year-old Syrian to five years in prison for plotting an attack in the Scandinavian country and pledging allegiance to the Islamic State group. Three of the years would be suspended, the Oslo district court said in the verdict handed down late Tuesday. The court said in its judgment that the suspect “despite his young age, had made a deliberate decision to carry out a terrorist act even if the plans had not materialized into a concrete project”. — AFP

Swiss to buy F-35A fighter jets from US

GENEVA: Switzerland’s government yesterday backed the purchase of 36 Lockheed Martin F-35A fighter jets to replace its fleet and five Patriot air defense units from fellow US manufacturer Raytheon. Switzerland’s current air defense set-up will reach the end of its service life in 2030 and the search for a replacement fleet has been long and hotly contested.

“The Federal Council is confident that these two systems are the most suitable for protecting the Swiss population from air threats in the future,” the

government said in a statement. The decision will now be put to the Swiss parliament—and also risks being challenged at the ballot box, with left-wingers and anti-militarists seeking to trigger a public vote.

The F-35A combat aircraft is already used by the US Air Force and several European countries. It was chosen ahead of the Airbus Eurofighter; the F/A-18 Super Hornet by Boeing; and French firm Dassault’s Rafale. For the ground-based air defense (GBAD) system, Patriot saw off competition from SAMP/T by France’s Eurosam.

“An evaluation has revealed that these two systems offer the highest overall benefit at the lowest overall cost,” the government said. Switzerland is famously neutral. However, its long-standing position is one of armed

Continued on Page 2



Florida death toll rises to 16

SURFSIDE, Florida: Four more bodies were discovered overnight in the rubble of a collapsed apartment building in Florida, authorities said yesterday as the search for more than 140 people unaccounted for entered its seventh day. The official death toll now stands at 16 after most of a building in the Miami-area town of Surfside suddenly pancaked early last Thursday, but hopes are dwindling that the hundreds of rescuers combing the oceanfront site will find anyone alive. “We’ve now recovered four additional victims.” — AFP



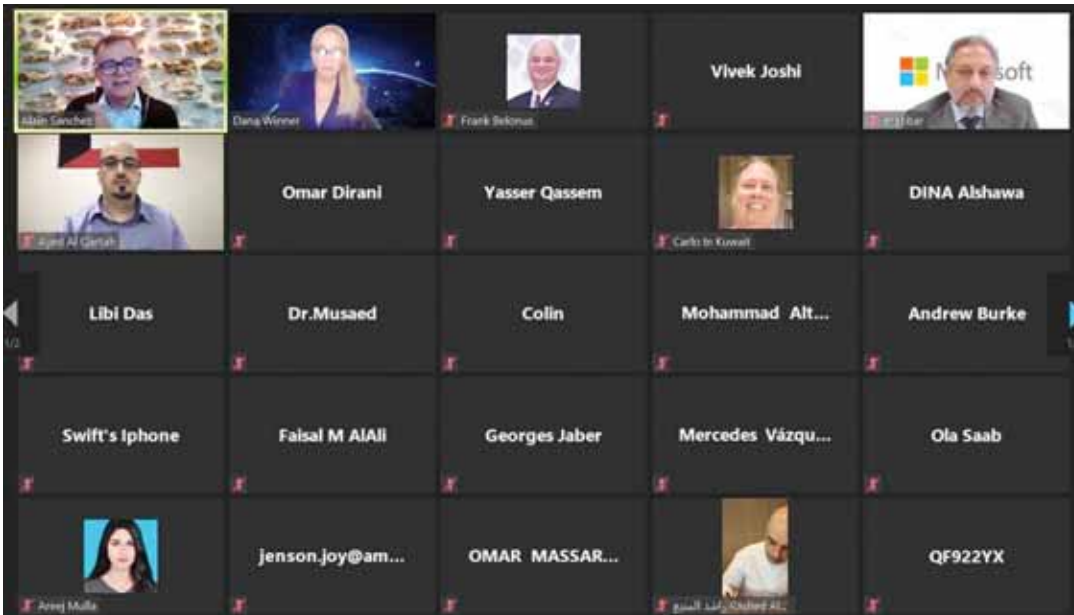
Local

# Deputy Amir, Crown Prince receives senior officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. His Highness the Deputy Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. Moreover, His Highness received State Audit Bureau Chairman Faisal Al-Shayaa. — KUNA photos

## ABCK-AmCham Kuwait hosts panel discussion on Cybersecurity



KUWAIT: The ABCK-AmCham Kuwait held a ‘Data Loss Protection (DLP), Cybersecurity, and Best Practices in Kuwait’ panel discussion, with the support of the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) and the US-Kuwait Business Council. The panelists for this discussion included Mohammad Altura - Chief, Market Regulations and Competition at CITRA, Vivek Joshi - Deputy Counselor for

Economic Affairs at the US Embassy in Kuwait, Alain Sanchez - EMEA CISO at Fortinet, Majd Abbar - National Technology Officer at Microsoft, Ayed Al Qartah, MSc - Technical Solutions Architect at CISCO, Faisal M Al-Ali - Enterprise Risk Management Manager at Zain. The discussion was moderated by Dana Winner, MSc - Cybersecurity Policy and Certified Information System Security Professional (CISSP).

## Gulf Bank empowers youth at INJAZ Kuwait’s competition



KUWAIT: Gulf Bank sponsored INJAZ Kuwait’s annual “Company Program” competition for the 16th year in a row, as part of the Bank’s long-standing partnership with the non-profit organization. As is customary with the annual competition, participants pitched their business ideas to a panel of judges in hopes of winning prizes at both the high school and university levels.

In light of ongoing circumstances, this year’s competition was held virtually through video communications app, Zoom, and took place over the course of two days from June 25-26. On the first day of the competition, the students’ various projects were scored by a panel of judges who met at the Chairmen Club in KIPCO. Dalya Al-Qassem, Head of Investment Management at Gulf Bank, represented the Bank on the judging panel this year. This year’s winners all received prizes sponsored by Gulf Bank.

This year, Neowrap was announced as the winner at the high school level, taking home the “Best Company of the Year” award. Neowrap is an eco-friendly, anti-bacterial, reusable, biodegradable, and more durable alternative to regular plastic wrap, and aims to provide customers with a more sustainable food storage option. DriveMart, a machine that allows customers to make purchases from the comfort of their cars, took home the “Best Company of the Year” award at the university level.

Lujain Al-Qenaei, Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, commented: “We would like to congratulate Neowrap and DriveMart on winning this year’s Company Program competition, and are looking forward to seeing what more innovative ideas they have in store for us. The annual Company Program competition by

INJAZ Kuwait is an event that we look forward to every year, as it offers us wonderful insight at the growing levels of creativity and innovation of today’s youth. Despite the increasing demands of today’s job market, our annual collaborations with local youth only ever increase our confidence in their ability to meet challenges head-on. We are excited to renew our partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, and are committed to supporting the next generation of young entrepreneurs.”

INJAZ Kuwait, part of the global network of Junior Achievement worldwide, is a non-profit (NPO), non-governmental organization (NGO) driven by Kuwait’s private sector. Through strategic partnerships with Kuwait’s business and education sectors, and with the help of qualified and dedicated volunteers, INJAZ delivers both Arabic and English language educational programs on entrepreneurial and leadership skills to build successful careers.

Gulf Bank continues to sponsor INJAZ Kuwait as part of its commitment to encourage and develop professional work skills among young adults. It is worth noting that INJAZ Kuwait is a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to educating and training Kuwait’s youth in workforce readiness, financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

Gulf Bank offers a distinct model for sustainability programs, implementing both internal and community-led initiatives year-round. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) social responsibility program, heading various educational initiatives throughout the year that have a sustainable impact on the lives of youth and society.

## MPs criticize decision to...

Continued from Page 1

The session was called to debate a number of key issues including amending the election law but Ghanem said he was informed by the government that it will not attend and adjourned the session.

Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs

## Algeria finance minister named...

Continued from Page 1

The low national turnout has been seen as a sign of Algerians’ disillusionment with and defiance of a political class deemed to have lost much of its credibility. Algeria’s long-running “Hirak” pro-democracy protest movement boycotted the polls. Ahead of the official results, the MSP, a moderate Islamist party, had said its candidates were in

Mubarak Al-Harees said the government boycotted the session because it was not consulted ahead of the meeting and was not allowed to express its opinions when the issues were debated by the Assembly panels. He said the government received the invitation to the meeting in less than 24 hours and could not prepare to debate the issues.

The Assembly is due to hold another special session today to hear a briefing by the finance minister on the country’s financial status before announcing the closing of the Assembly term.

the lead in most regions and hinted it could be part of the government.

But following consultations with President Tebboune, the party said it decided to step back. “What was proposed does not allow us to influence political and economic developments,” MSP chief Abderazzak Makri told a news conference in Algiers. He said he had been asked to propose a list of 27 names from which the executive would select four or five ministers. “It’s not up to us to choose our ministers (in the government) and that is unacceptable,” he said. “We want to be in power and not its facade,” Makri said. The MSP had been part of successive Algerian governments from 1996 to 2011. — AFP

## Swiss to buy F-35A fighter...

Continued from Page 1

neutrality and the landlocked European country has mandatory conscription for men.

“A fleet of 36 aircraft would be large enough to cover Switzerland’s airspace protection needs over the longer term in a prolonged situation of heightened tensions,” the government said.

“The air force must be able to ensure that Swiss airspace cannot be used by foreign parties in a military conflict.”

### Biden’s hard sell

Lobbying for the contract has been intense, both in public and behind the scenes. US President Joe Biden sang the praises of the two US-made fighter jets in the running, in a meeting with Swiss President Guy Parmelin ahead of his summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva earlier this month.

Meanwhile, French Defense Minister Florence Parly visited Switzerland in March to meet her counterpart. The government said the F-35A had a marked technological advantage over the other candidates because it had powerful new systems that ensured information superiority. “The F-35A will be able to sustain its technological lead well into the future. Given the planned service life of 30 years, this is a major advantage.”

At five billion francs, the procurement costs

were around two billion francs cheaper than the second-lowest bidder, said the government. “We’re honored by the Swiss government’s selection of the F-35 — the most advanced and capable platform for supporting Swiss air defense requirements,” Lockheed Martin said on Twitter, adding in a video that the first jet would be delivered in 2025.

### Long path to decision

Switzerland began seeking replacements for its ageing fleet of fighter jets more than a decade ago, but the issue became caught up in a political battle in the wealthy Alpine nation. Switzerland has around 30 F/A-18 Hornets, which will reach the end of their lifespan in 2030, plus F-5 Tigers which have been in service for four decades and are not equipped for night flights. In 2014, the country looked set to purchase 22 Gripen E fighter jets from the Swedish group Saab, only to see the public vote against releasing the necessary funds.

Bern launched a new selection process in 2018, and a referendum last year to release six billion Swiss francs (\$6.5 billion) to purchase new fighters of the government’s choice squeezed through with 50.1 percent backing. Meanwhile, Switzerland’s current GBAD system is also old and lacks the capacity to meet the widening spectrum of modern threats.

Its range of Rapier and Stinger short-range missiles have been in service since 1963. Patriot was the clear winner for the replacement, as “areas can be protected both independently and in combination with fighter aircraft”, the government said. The procurement costs amount to just under two billion francs. — AFP

## Will US-Iran tensions flare...

Continued from Page 1

with the fall of the IS “caliphate”. Hashed factions have since stepped up demands for a full US withdrawal from Iraq.

Iraqi politicians, trapped between Washington and Tehran, have tried to balance ties with both sides and warned against their country becoming an arena for a violent showdown. That failed to prevent a major spike in tensions in late 2019, when US raids after the death of a civilian contractor killed 25 pro-Iranian fighters, prompting hundreds of protesters to attack the American embassy in Baghdad.

Then on January 3 last year came the sharpest escalation yet: an American drone strike killed revered Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and the Hashed’s former second-in-command Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis near Baghdad airport. Despite a series of incidents involving the US, Iran and their respective allies elsewhere in the region, the two sides avoided a full-scale military showdown.

But American interests in Iraq continued to be targeted in rocket attacks, blamed on but never claimed by Iran-backed groups. More recently, Tehran’s allies from Iraq to Yemen have taken to using Iranian-made armed drones capable of more accurate, damaging attacks and of breaching US anti-rocket defenses.

### What has changed?

Since replacing Trump, US President Joe Biden has launched indirect talks with Tehran on reviving the nuclear deal-but he has also ordered strikes, including those overnight into Monday which reportedly killed nine pro-Iranian fighters. “The Biden administration is trying to restore deterrence by changing its red lines from killing American serv-

ice people to any escalation against US forces in Iraq, especially sophisticated drone attacks,” said Hamdi Malik, a specialist on Iraqi armed groups. This harder line from Washington has prompted tougher rhetoric from Hashed leaders.

Qais Al-Khazali, a senior pro-Iran figure in the Hashed, warned Tuesday that his group’s operations had reached “a new stage” and promised to “avenge the precious blood of our youth with the blood of occupying soldiers”. The Iraqi government decried a “a blatant and unacceptable violation” of the country’s sovereignty. But within the Hashed many believe that didn’t go far enough, instead calling for direct attacks against the “occupier”.

Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi, long seen as Washington’s best ally in Iraq, has been increasingly forced to bend to the Hashed’s will. And with elections approaching in October, he appears to be seeking better ties with Iran. Kadhemi is set to visit Washington soon but was also the first foreign leader invited to Tehran by Iran’s incoming president Ebrahim Raisi, on the day of the ultraconservative’s mid-June election victory.

### Who wants an escalation?

While the US, Iran and their allies have all hardened their rhetoric and engaged in shows of force, no side has an interest in a conflagration, observers say. Washington “took its time to respond” to the deaths of two American contractors in Iraq in a drone operation early this year-but the Biden administration “could opt to escalate”, one Western diplomat told AFP. With the US and Iran engaged in nuclear talks, “it seems that Biden is distinguishing between negotiations in Vienna and Iraqi factions which are trying to exert pressure to give Iran leverage,” said Iraqi analyst Ihsan Al-Shamari. Malik said that “while Iran encourages the Iraqi militias to continue with minor attacks against US forces in Iraq, it doesn’t want a big war at this stage”. Nor, it seems clear, does the United States, which is now in the process of withdrawing its troops from several theatres, including Afghanistan-and Iraq. — AFP



## Local

# Humidity to subside, but temperatures rise in Kuwait

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's temperature that is ranging between 45 and 52 degrees Celsius will continue until mid-August, says meteorologist Adel Saadoun. The Fintas Astronomical Observatory Director said the prevailing weather condition with humidity will continue for some time, and that people should brace for a longer summer heat.

"Temperatures are increasing until the middle of July and the beginning of August. Then, it will start reducing by the second week of August," he said. The veteran meteorologist explained that the southeasterly winds are bringing humidity to Kuwait for the past few days. "We should expect

this type of weather condition until next week," he noted. Humidity had reached up to 90 percent before going down a bit yesterday.

Today's weather is expected to be the same as yesterday, before it changes back to dry within the next few days. "But this weather is normal; there is nothing extraordinary in the weather condition in Kuwait," Saadoun explained. "We have this type of weather since time immemorial. We just need to be prepared at all time and stay hydrated."

Saadoun further noted the temperature can vary in Kuwait depending on where it is taken, as it increases the furthest a person moves from the shore. "Temperature right now is up to 50 degrees at 1:30 pm in Kuwait," he said.

"Temperature is usually recorded in areas far from the shore, like Jahra, Salmi and Abdali. It will vary from place to place. For example, it is only 43 now in Fintas because it is closer to the shore. But as you go further north, the temperature gets higher," Saadoun mentioned that there is still a chance of sandstorms happening in Kuwait in the coming days and weeks.



Adel Al-Saadoun



## 50th anniversary of China-Kuwait ties

By Javaid Ahmad

local@kuwaittimes.net

This year, China and Kuwait are going to celebrate their 50th year of strong bilateral diplomatic relations. The history of their successful mutual and strong diplomatic relations has far-reaching success stories in the areas of politics, economics, and cultural diplomacy. Kuwait was the first Gulf country who has recognized and established diplomatic relationships with China back in 1971.

Since then, both China and Kuwait have established bilateral relationships and had signed several bilateral trade and other agreements. Kuwait in this region is the first country who has signed the historical Belt and Road project with China. Apart from that, Kuwait is being considered an important strategic partner of China in this region. China has practically demonstrated this, during the 1990 Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait.

Kuwait's late Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had visited China in 2009 and 2018 and signed several bilateral agreements during his total of seven trips to China. This demonstrates the strong nature of a continuous bilateral relationship between the two countries. This year, the members of the political bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Director of Foreign Minister Office China have visited Kuwait. Kuwait has also established its Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's first overseas office in China. Apart from that, Kuwait Investment Authority in its field of investment and cooperation has established its successful investment examples in China. Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) has also established its own office in China, while China's News Agency (Xinhua) has already a well-functioning office in Kuwait.

China and Kuwait have started bilateral trade in 1955 and until 2020, both countries have almost \$14.5 billion in trade volume between them. China has exported \$3.5 billion and imported \$10.7 billion. As of today, China is one of the biggest trade partners of Kuwait in the non-oil sector trade. China has invested \$1.1 billion while Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has invested in 40 projects and handed \$1 billion in loans to China. In addition, several Chinese companies are working in Kuwait in the sectors of energy, housing, and telecommunication. China's medical teams have earned huge respect in Kuwait and their visits can safely be named as health diplomacy. Recently, China's under-construction embassy building further cements the strong bilateral relationship between the two countries.

## Kuwait's interior minister, UK official discuss cooperation

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah yesterday held talks on mutual cooperation with the UK senior defense adviser for the Middle East Affairs, Major General Joi Martin Simpson. The Ministry of Interior quoted minister Sheikh Thamer as affirming the depth of cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the UK, adding that the two sides broached over issues of joint concern, particularly at the security level. Meanwhile, Maj Gen Simpson, along with the UK ambassador who was also present in the meeting, as well as members of Maj Gen Simpson's delegation, expressed gratitude to minister Sheikh Thamer for the warm accommodation, affirming significance of the topics that were addressed during the meeting.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Thamer held talks with Senegal's outgoing Ambassador Abdulahad Mbacke, thanking him for his contributions towards improving bilateral ties. The Senegalese envoy said he appreciated the hospitality and support he received in Kuwait, wishing the country continued development and prosperity. Separately, the Kuwaiti interior minister met with Philipp Ackermann, the German Foreign Office's Director for relations with the Middle East and North Africa, in an encounter that centered on bilateral ties and issues of mutual concern.

Also yesterday, Kuwait Fire Force Director Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mikrad received Ambassador Mbacke, and conveyed to him greetings from Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. He also lauded the efforts of the Ambassador in strengthening cooperation and coordination between the two countries. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah meets the UK senior defense adviser for the Middle East Affairs, Major General Joi Martin Simpson. —KUNA photos



**Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah meets Philipp Ackermann, the German Foreign Office's Director for relations with the Middle East and North Africa.**



**Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah meets Senegal's Ambassador Abdulahad Mbacke.**



**Kuwait Fire Force Director Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mikrad meets Senegal's Ambassador Abdulahad Mbacke.**

## Eleven women rescued from sinking boat

**KUWAIT:** Firemen rescued 11 female citizens after their rented boat started sinking near Kubbar Island. Teams from the Shuaiba and sea rescue fire



**KUWAIT:** The boat is seen after the rescue operation.



**Firemen battle the blaze in Qurain.**

stations headed to the scene in response to an emergency call, and managed to rescue the women and take them safely to the Fahaheel slipway, Kuwait Fire Force said.

Meanwhile, Qurain and Mubarak Al-Kabeer firemen put out a blaze that started in a garbage container and trees, then spread to a truck and the front wall of a bank's branch near Qurain Co-operative Society. No injuries were reported and an investigation was opened, Kuwait Fire Force noted.

## Kuwaiti humanitarian aid convoy arrives in Gaza



**GAZA:** Kuwaiti aid convoy arrived yesterday in the Gaza Strip, carrying food and medical supplies for those affected by the recent Zionist attack. The president of Weaam charitable organization Mohammad Sami said that the convoy, which arrived through Beit Hanon, carried three shipments loaded with foodstuffs, in addition to four others carrying medicines and medical equipment, and two were carrying blankets and mattresses.

He praised Kuwait's role in supporting the Palestinian cause and called the world to reconstruct what Zionist forces destroyed and continue supporting the affected people. —KUNA





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## News in brief

### Uni delegation visits health center

**KUWAIT:** A delegation of Nice University Hospital visited on Tuesday headquarters of the primary health care center in the district of Al-Sulaibikhat as part of a joint approach to boost cooperation and exchange expertise. The Kuwaiti Ministry of Health (MoH) said in a statement that the delegation met the director, Dr Dina Al-Dbaih, and the representative of international relations at the MoH, Dr Abdullah Al-Ali. The French visitors admired the level of the health care at the center, the statement said, noting that the two sides discussed plans for habilitating medical cadres. Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization (KIMS) had signed an agreement on Monday with the French Nice university to allow Kuwaiti doctors to study medicine and receive Fellowship in different medical specializations. — KUNA

### KRCS, QRCS sign deal

**DOHA:** Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) inked on Tuesday a cooperation deal to carry out a project on improving living conditions and providing healthcare to the Myanmar refugee camps in Bangladesh. Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) said in a statement the deal was signed by its secretary general Ali bin Hassan Al-Hamadi and Chairman of the Board of Directors of KRCS Dr Hilal Al-Sayer. The project, worth \$3 million, will be executed in Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh in cooperation with its red crescent society, it added, noting that the scheme will benefit over 800,000 refugees. QRCS provides \$2.5 million, while Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development offers \$500,000 to fund the project. Under the deal, two mosques or two social centers will be established to help the beneficiaries practice their religious rites and organize activities in a safe environment, according to the statement. —KUNA

# Zain celebrates Kuwait's top graduates

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, hosted a special ceremony to recognize the outstanding achievements of Kuwait's top high school graduates. The ceremony was held at Zain's main headquarters in Shuwaikh under strict health precautions, and witnessed the presence of the students' parents and the company's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan.

At the end of every academic year, Zain holds a special ceremony to honor and recognize Kuwait's top-performing students who excelled in their high school journey. Last year, the company was only able to celebrate this occasion virtually due to lockdowns and school closures imposed by the pandemic.

The recent improvement in the health situation and the gradual return to normal life boosted by the national vaccination campaign have encouraged Zain to hold a physical ceremony once again this year under strict health measures. The company hosted two groups of students and their parents on two different time slots: one for Kuwait's top graduates and the other for top graduates among Kuwaitis. This approach has guaranteed implementing social distancing and avoiding crowding.

Addressing the students, Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan said: "I am delighted and happy to welcome you today at Zain's Wonderful World to recognize your amazing achievements. Congratulations on a job well done, and God bless you".

Roudhan continued: "Before addressing our remarkable guests of honor, I would like to share a word with their esteemed parents: with success comes an immense sense of joy, and what makes this sensation even more joyful is the fact that your very own children are the ones who have achieved it. You must be very proud, and this surely is only the first step in a road full of success and joy".

Roudhan added: "Your achievement this year should be met with doubled appreciation. I am sure that, with the change from a traditional school system into a virtual one in such a short period of time, studying for final exams was not an easy feat. This is especially true given the stressful and unusual times we all went through in the past period. However, this has been a good opportunity to prepare you for the future. Rapid change is the new normal, and adaptability to change in all its shapes and forms is an important factor for achieving success in one's career and life in general".

Roudhan stressed: "Today you face the final challenge, which is college life. Higher education differs from previous grades in that it features a very important aspect: passion. Your college education will center around your passion in life, and will pave the way in front of you to make long-term friendships, learn more about yourselves, and ultimately serve your nation and your community". Roudhan noted: "Nowadays, the variables of success not only depend on academic excellence, but exceed that into developing oneself, adapting to change, and achieving happiness".

Roudhan concluded: "At Zain, we strongly believe that education is the cornerstone of the



**KUWAIT:** Zain's Eaman Al-Roudhan and Waleed Al-Khashti with a group of the honored students.



**Eaman Al-Roudhan honors top students.**



country's future, and we take pride in the fact that we offer our employees equal chances to achieve gender equality and inclusiveness in the workplace. We also adopt passionate and competent graduates to reinforce our human resources".

As a leading national company, Zain firmly believes in the importance of contributing to the progress of the education sector, and looks to empower and prepare the youth for the important roles they will play in the future of the country.

Zain is fully committed to supporting young people in their development through a wide variety of community activities and programs, including award programs, educational programs, and career development initiatives. The company's solid CSSR strategy is what drives it to continue being committed to support all sectors of society.



## Dasman Bilingual School graduates its 16th Class for 2020-2021

**KUWAIT:** Dasman Bilingual School (DBS) Vice Chairman Osama Rashid Al-Armeli and Superintendent Samar Dizmen graced DBS' graduates of its sixteenth group of students with the American high school diploma, in a ceremony held recently under the patronage of Salem Muthib Al-Ozainah - Chairman and CEO of the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority.

The extravagant event was held at the Jaber Al Ali Stadium. The Superintendent expressed the great honor of celebrating the achievements of DBS students during these extraordinary and difficult times. She mulled over the long, perhaps exhausting but certainly a fruitful and rewarding journey.

Dizmen echoed the culture and ethos of DBS "where we teach our students to be creative, imaginative, think originally and unconventionally and not to be afraid to push the boundaries. Above all, we teach them values to be respectful, considerate of others' ideas, accept the different and embrace the unknown as those qualities and values can transform individuals into real citizens of the world that are able to adapt to critical circumstances and provide solutions to humanity's grand challenges."

"In regards of the pandemic, you all have witnessed the struggle of societies to react and adjust to the new conditions," Dizmen said. "Transformative educational protocols were introduced rapidly for adaptability and perseverance to provide quality education." Dizmen was certain it is not the end but rather "the beginning of a new, perhaps even more exciting and unpredictable journey that will lead you to the next step to modify our way of thinking, to be creative and redefine your approaches to problem management and solution."

Dizmen reassured the graduates that Dasman Bilingual School has provided the appropriate skills, values and disposition for them to set and achieve high goals to make their transition to higher education and/or workforce become a reality. "Congratulations on your graduation! I wish you every success in this new chapter of your life. Good luck and God bless you all!" she said.

Eid Dhari Al-Nassar prepared a speech in Arabic on behalf of the graduating students. The speeches in English were presented by Mariam Bader Al-Sarraf and Sara Adnan Al-Rashdan. In their speeches, students thanked their parents and the school's faculty. They also expressed, on behalf of their fellow classmates, their happiness to have finally reached this point after years of hard work, learning and acquiring knowledge - and said that they are leaving this phase of their learning experience with many positive and unforgettable memories. Special thanks went to



**Salem Al-Ozainah with Osama Al-Armeli and Samar Dizmen in the presence of his family.**



**(From left) Samar Dizmen, the MC of the event Ali Najim and student graduate Eid Al-Nassar.**

Dizmen for her love, care and efforts given to all students during their years of study.

Ozainah said in his honorary speech addressed to the Graduates: "Dear parents, I would like to congratulate you on this remarkable day that you have been waiting for so long to witness the success of your children. I extend my thanks and gratitude to you for your attention, patience, vigilance and your hard work in order to see your children crowned on this happy day, I pray to God that you see them in the highest ranks of success."

Ozainah then addressed his speech to the school administration and teachers. "The esteemed Dasman School administration and distinguished teachers, success is the moment of victory that is awaited by every persevering and struggling," he said. "This moment would not come without your presence beside the students and your harnessing of your efforts and support for them throughout these years."

"To the graduating students, by education and money, people can build their possessions. From this platform, your journey towards knowledge and success begins, and determination, success will be his ally. Your country and your parents are waiting for you to be the best example to follow," Ozainah concluded. The graduation ceremony ended with Ozainah, Armeli and Dizmen presenting students with their graduation diplomas and awards.



**Student graduate Zaid Osama Al-Armeli**

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Record-breaking heat wave grips Canada and US

## Junkyard of empires: Afghans sift through US leftovers

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JIMMA: In this file photo of June 21, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed arriving at a polling station to cast his ballot. — AFP

# Ethiopia loses Tigray capital to rebels

## Abiy admits fall of Mekele, vows to retake city

**ADDIS ABABA:** Ethiopia's leaders sought yesterday to downplay the significance of the army's pull-back from the regional capital of war-hit Tigray, insisting they could retake the city from rebels whenever they wanted.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said the city of Mekele, captured by Ethiopian forces in November but seized by rebels in a stunning turnaround this week, had "lost its center of gravity" during eight months of war in Tigray.

"When we see Mekele militarily, it does not have the same appeal as when we went there," the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner said in remarks distributed by his office yesterday. At a press conference, Lieutenant General Bacha Debele said the soldiers'

departure from Mekele was intended to "give relief" to the population-but warned the move could be quickly reversed.

"If they provoke us, we can go back to Mekele today. However the destruction will be worse than before," said Bacha, a senior officer who has been involved in the Tigray operation. Abiy sent troops into Tigray last November to oust the northern region's former ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). He said the move came in response to TPLF attacks on federal army camps, and promised a swift victory. On Monday, though, the army suffered a dramatic reversal when rebels known as the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) captured Mekele, only about a week after launching a major

counter-offensive. The TDF has since built on its gains and, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG) think tank, now controls most of Tigray.

### War of words

Getachew Reda, a spokesman for the Tigrayan forces, told AFP Tuesday that their gains represented a military victory, saying "the strongest segment of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces is absolutely destroyed." But Redwan Hussein, spokesman for a government task force on the Tigray conflict, described the army's withdrawal as strategic.

The rebels are "no longer an existential threat to the wellbeing of the nation" and Ethiopia needs to focus on other security challenges, the spokesman

said. On Monday evening, after soldiers left Mekele, the federal government announced what it called a "unilateral ceasefire." The move, it said, was intended to facilitate agricultural production and aid distribution. The TDF, however, has dismissed the ceasefire as a "joke" and vowed to rid Tigray of Ethiopian soldiers and their allies, including Eritrean troops and fighters from Ethiopia's Amhara region, which borders Tigray to the south.

Getachew said the rebels were prepared to pursue their "enemies" all the way to the Ethiopian and Eritrean capitals in order to "secure Tigray." The conflict in Tigray has already left thousands dead and pushed hundreds of thousands to the brink of famine. —AFP

## China certified malaria-free after 70-yr fight

**BEIJING:** China was certified as malaria-free yesterday by the World Health Organization, following a 70-year effort to eradicate the mosquito-borne disease. The country reported 30 million cases of the infectious disease annually in the 1940s but has now gone four consecutive years without an indigenous case. "We congratulate the people of China on ridding the country of malaria," said WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"Their success was hard-earned and came only after decades of targeted and sustained action. With this announcement, China joins the growing number of countries that are showing the world that a malaria-free future is a viable goal." Countries that have achieved at least three consecutive years of zero indigenous cases can apply for WHO certification of their malaria-free status. They must

present rigorous evidence-and demonstrate the capacity to prevent transmission re-emerging.

Beijing, which is in the middle of a propaganda push ahead of celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the founding of its ruling Communist Party this week, hailed the WHO's certification as a "great achievement for China's human rights cause". "The CCP and the Chinese government have always prioritized safeguarding people's health, safety and prosperity," said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin at a routine briefing in Beijing.

"Eliminating malaria is a great contribution by China to human health and global human rights progress." China becomes the 40th territory certified malaria-free by the Geneva-based WHO. The last countries to gain the status were El Salvador (2021), Algeria and Argentina (2019), and Paraguay and Uzbekistan (2018).

There is a separate list of 61 countries where malaria never existed, or disappeared without specific measures. China is also the first country in the WHO's Western Pacific region to be awarded a malaria-free certification in more than three decades.

The WHO's World Malaria Report



BEIJING: Cyclists ride past as workers adjust a barrier near decorations in Tiananmen Square a day before an event marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

2020 warned global progress against the disease was plateauing, particularly in African countries bearing the brunt of cases and deaths. In 2019 the global tally of malaria cases was estimated at 229 million—a figure that has been at the same level for the past four years.

In the 1950s, Beijing started working out where malaria was spreading and began to combat it with preventative

anti-malarial medicines, said the WHO. The country reduced mosquito breeding grounds and stepped up spraying insecticide in homes. While searching for new malaria treatments in the 1970s, China discovered artemisinin—the core compound of artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs), which are the most effective antimalarial drugs available. —AFP

## Moroccan journalist Radi protests detention before judge

**CASABLANCA:** Moroccan journalist and rights activist Omar Radi, in detention for 11 months accused of espionage and rape, protested his innocence Tuesday in his first appearance before a judge. The case against him was void and did "not justify my imprisonment for nearly a year", he said, adding that he was the victim of people "who consider themselves above the law".

Radi's trial was postponed to July 6. The 34-year-old faces charges of rape and "undermining the internal security of the state", two separate cases that were investigated individually but will be judged together. Questioned by the judge about text messages he had exchanged with a diplomat from the Dutch embassy in 2018, he dismissed any question of espionage.

"Where is the crime in a journalist meeting and exchanging (views) with an official from a foreign country?" he

said. In the rape case, he denied his accuser's claim that their relations had not been consensual. During Tuesday's hearing, Radi pointed out that the espionage investigation against him had been launched at the end of June 2020.

Just few days earlier, Amnesty International had published a report saying that the Moroccan authorities had used spyware to monitor his mobile phone, something the authorities have always denied. Radi's arrest and detention have provoked protests from rights activists, intellectuals and politicians both inside Morocco and abroad. There have been calls for his release on bail, as well as for the release of another journalist, Souleimane Raissouni, who has been charged with sexual assault.

He has been on a hunger strike in protest for the past 83 days. Last week, his family said he was close to



TUNIS: Members of the Tunisian Journalists Union pose with posters in support of imprisoned Moroccan journalists Omar Radi and Souleimane Raissouni (bottom right), on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day in Tunis on May 3, 2021. — AFP

death. But the courts decided Tuesday to continue with the trial set for 49-year-old Raissouni, who has been held in custody for more than a year. He has missed the last two hearings in his case but has declared himself ready to attend the next, provided he is supplied with an ambulance and a wheel-

chair. Raissouni, chief editor of the Akhbar Al Yaoum newspaper, also denies the charges against him. While the two journalists' supporters have denounced what they say are politically motivated trials, the authorities have stressed what they say is the independence of the judiciary. —AFP

## Family slams Kurdish force for torturing son to death

**QAMISHLI, Syria:** A family has accused Kurdish forces in northeast Syria of torturing to death a detained relative, sparking a social media uproar despite the denial of Kurdish authorities. The accusations came from the family of Amin Issa Al-Ahmad, a 34-year-old who was detained by the Kurdish Asayish security forces on May 22, allegedly on charges of corruption and bribery.

His family received his corpse on Monday and charged in a statement the next day that it bore signs of torture. A medical examiner hired by the family detected a "fractured jaw and bleeding in the skull", the statement said.

There were also "bruises on the knees... the neck, and the back of the head," as well as burns, it added. The family said it held the Kurdish administration responsible for the "death of our son under torture, since it is a de-facto government responsible for the safety and security of all citizens living in areas under its control". The allegations are the strongest and most direct accusations of torture yet against the US-backed Kurdish authorities who have carved out a semi-autonomous region in Syria's northeast following years of war. The Kurdish administration has denied the allegations.

A judicial body linked to the administration, citing medical reports, on Tuesday said Amin had died "of a stroke", and not of torture. It said there were no traces of "beating... or torture" on his body and claimed it had invited the family to select its own doctors for further examination.

But "the body was received and buried by the family without any medical examination," it said. Amin's family published pictures showing him with a bloodied, swollen face, and with large red marks on his body. The Kurdish administration said the images were fabricated and released footage of Issa's corpse that did not show any evidence of abuse.

On social media networks, Kurdish activists were among the many users pressing Kurdish authorities to investigate the death. Kurdish authorities regularly tout themselves as a model of democratic rule in war-torn Syria. But critics accuse Kurdish-led forces of having recruited child soldiers and the administration of having detained political opponents, charges they deny. —AFP



## International

# Scores dead as record-breaking heat wave grips Canada and US

## 134 deaths in Vancouver mostly related to the heat

**VANCOUVER:** Scores of deaths in Canada's Vancouver area are likely linked to a grueling heat wave, authorities said Tuesday, as the country recorded its highest ever temperature amid scorching conditions that extended to the US Pacific Northwest. At least 134 people have died suddenly since Friday in the Vancouver area, according to figures released by the city police department and the Royal Canadian Mounted police. The Vancouver Police Department alone said it had responded to more than 65 sudden deaths since Friday, with the vast majority "related to the heat."

Canada set a new all-time high temperature record for a third day in a row Tuesday, reaching 121 degrees Fahrenheit (49.5 degrees Celsius) in Lytton, British Columbia, about 155 miles (250 kilometers) east of Vancouver, the country's weather service, Environment Canada, reported. "Vancouver has never experienced heat like this, and sadly dozens of people are dying because of it," police sergeant Steve Addison said.

Other local municipalities have said they too have responded to many sudden death calls, but have yet to release tolls. Some Vancouver locals said they had never experienced such temperatures before. "It's never this bad. I've never seen anything like this," said a Vancouver resident who only gave her name as Rosa.

"I hope it never becomes like this ever again. This is too much." Others lamented that some residents were more vulnerable to the heat than others. "I feel for those people whether they're the elderly demographic or people who live on the downtown eastside of Vancouver who don't have a cool spot to live or sleep," said river swimmer Graham Griedger.

Climate change is causing record-setting temperatures to become more frequent. Globally, the decade to 2019 was the hottest recorded, and the five hottest years have all occurred within the last five years. The scorch-

ing heat stretching from the US state of Oregon to Canada's Arctic territories has been blamed on a high-pressure ridge trapping warm air in the region.

Temperatures in the US Pacific Northwest cities of Portland and Seattle reached levels not seen since record-keeping began in the 1940s: 115 degrees Fahrenheit in Portland and 108 in Seattle Monday, according to the National Weather Service. Vancouver on the Pacific coast has for several days recorded temperatures above 86 degrees Fahrenheit (or almost 20 degrees above seasonal norms).

The chief coroner for the province of British Columbia, which includes Vancouver, said that it had "experienced a significant increase in deaths reported where it is suspected that extreme heat has been contributory." The service said in a statement it recorded 233 deaths between Friday and Monday, compared to 130 on average.

### 'Hottest week ever'

"We are in the midst of the hottest week British Columbians have ever experienced, and there are consequences to that, disastrous consequences for families and for communities," British Columbia Premier John Horgan told a news conference. He urged "checking up on those people we know might be at risk, making sure we have cold compresses in the fridge or we're staying in the coolest part of our homes, and making sure that we're taking steps to get through this heat wave."

Environment Canada has issued alerts for British Columbia, Alberta, and parts of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon and the Northwest Territories, saying the "prolonged, dangerous and historic heat wave will persist through this week." The heat wave has forced schools and COVID-19 vaccination centers to close in the Vancouver area, while officials set up temporary

kilometers (15 miles) north of the city in 2012, where he runs training sessions in a bid to reintegrate them into society. "For me, these kids are victims and not perpetrators," Blahyi said, adding that coaxing them out of the underworld is a challenge.

"I usually explain to them my own story, and then I ask them to follow suit by giving their lives to Christ and leaving the drugs."

### 'Deep bitterness'

Blahyi's 0.6-hectare (1.5-acre) compound is surrounded by high walls topped with barbed wire. Inside, grown-up former child soldiers hoe the ground and tend to four brick-bread ovens.

There is also a small chicken farm on site, and volunteers come to teach skills such as carpentry, plumbing and painting. Some 500 former child soldiers have passed through the compound, according to Blahyi. One of them, 38-year-old William Wilson, said that he robbed people with machetes for drug money before meeting Blahyi. "I chose to go to Bible school," Wilson said. "Today I am an evangelist and married with three kids to the daughter of a bishop." Another former child soldier, 33-year-old Titus Sylvester Borbor, said that Blahyi helped him kick drugs and put him on the path to becoming a university student.

"Today my parents are happy, they have accepted me back," he said. Many children took up arms to protect their relatives during the civil war, but found themselves rejected by their families once the fighting stopped. "It put deep bitterness in them," said Blahyi, explaining that the legacy of the conflict was still keenly felt across the country.

### Atrocities

In the first civil war, Blahyi led fighters from the feared ULIMO-the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy-that backed the then president Samuel Doe. It was Doe's 1990 assassination that sparked the orgy of violence that engulfed the country for most of that decade.

In January 2008, Blahyi testified to Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), recalling the atrocities he had committed to maintain his "special power." "Any time we captured a town, I had to make a human sacrifice. They bring to me a living child that I slaughter and take the heart off to eat it," he said to a stunned audience. He did not know how many people they killed, he said. "But for what I did, it is not less than twenty thousands," he added, breaking down in tears. The turning point, he said, came in 1996, when after seeing the blood of a child on his hand, "Jesus appeared to me and asked me to stop being a slave."—AFP



ANNAPOLIS, US: A man lies on the beach as his family plays in the Chesapeake Bay trying to escape the heat at Sandy Point State Park in Annapolis, Maryland Tuesday.— AFP

water fountains and misting stations on street corners.

Stores quickly sold out of portable air conditioners and fans, so several people without cooling at home told AFP they hunkered down in their air conditioned cars or underground parking garages at night.

Cities across the western United States and Canada opened emergency cooling centers and outreach workers handed out bottles of water and hats. The extreme

heat, combined with intense drought, also created the perfect conditions for several fires to break out over the weekend, and one blaze on the California-Oregon border had already burned about 1,500 acres (600 hectares) by Monday morning.

"Dubai would be cooler than what we're seeing now," David Phillips, a senior climatologist for Environment Canada, told AFP on Monday. —AFP

## Gen 'Butt Naked' rehabilitates ex-child soldiers

**MONROVIA:** Former Liberian rebel General Butt Naked, notorious for sacrificing children and charging into battle in the nude, now spends his time trying to rescue ex-child soldiers from drugs.

One of the most feared figures to emerge from the West African country's civil wars, Joshua Blahyi, by his own admission, sacrificed children and cannibalized them. He would also fight naked in the belief this imbued him with spiritual power, earning him the moniker "General Butt Naked." Mass killings, torture and rape characterized Liberia's two civil wars, which raged from 1989 to 1997 and from 1999 to 2003, claiming the lives of around a quarter of a million people. Many of these brutal crimes were carried out by drugged-up child soldiers. When the fighting ended, many of the youngsters remained hooked on drugs and slipped into a life of crime.



MONROVIA: Former Liberian rebel, Joshua Blahyi also known as General Butt Naked, plays checkers at his compound in Monrovia. — AFP

Blahyi, for his part, became an evangelical preacher. "We made them take arms and consume drugs," the 49-year-old told AFP. "Now I want to repair that mistake." Since 2006, he has been travelling to slums in the capital Monrovia to try to engage with former child soldiers. The former rebel also built a compound 25



Amy Gutmann

## US picks Gutmann as first woman envoy to Germany

**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden has nominated University of Pennsylvania president Amy Gutmann as ambassador to Germany. German government sources said yesterday, after tumultuous years with Donald Trump's envoy. Gutmann, 71, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, would be the first woman appointed to the post.

The German officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, confirmed a report in Der Spiegel magazine. Gutmann's appointment must be confirmed by the US Senate and approved by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The sources said no date had yet been set for her accreditation. The United States had previously been represented in Berlin by Trump ally Richard Grenell, who raised hackles in Germany with a combative approach, including vowing to empower anti-establishment right-wingers in Europe.

He regularly angered his host country with outspoken criticism of everything from the Iran nuclear deal to Berlin's defense spending and relations with Chinese tech firm Huawei. Grenell returned to Washington to become Trump's director of national intelligence before resigning as ambassador in June 2020.

Chargeé d'Affaires Robin Quiville had served as acting ambassador since then. Gutmann has led the University of Pennsylvania, an Ivy League institution, since 2004 and is an expert in democratic processes. She served as chair of Barack Obama's Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues.—AFP

## Russia COVID deaths hit record as country battles Delta variant

**MOSCOW:** Russia's COVID-19 death toll hit a new record yesterday as the country battles the highly infectious Delta variant, while Europe geared up for the launch of an EU-wide COVID certificate to boost its devastated tourism industry. Delta, the most contagious coronavirus variant identified to date, is fuelling concerns that the pandemic may be far from over after claiming nearly four million lives around the world.

Russia has reported 669 COVID deaths in the past 24 hours—a pandemic high for the second day in a row, according to government figures. The new record comes two days before Saint Petersburg hosts a Euro 2020 quarter-final tomorrow in front of 26,000 spectators, many of them foreigners who have flown in for the match. President Vladimir Putin pleaded with vaccine-skeptic Russians to get the shot, with only 15 percent of the population inoculated so far even though free jabs have been available in the country since December.

"It is necessary to listen, not to people who understand little about this and spread rumors, but to specialists," Putin said. He nonetheless said he did not support mandatory vaccinations, a policy brought in by Moscow and more than a dozen other regions for some workers in a bid to bring the infection rate down.

### Australian anger grows

The Delta variant is fuelling multiple outbreaks in Australia—a country that had largely escaped the mass infections seen elsewhere—with the outbreak town of Alice Springs yesterday following Sydney, Brisbane and other cities into lockdown. Anger is mounting among Australians over the country's slow vaccine rollout, with only about five percent jabbed so far after heavy reliance previously on border closures and strict hotel quarantines for overseas arrivals to curb the spread of the virus. "It is disgraceful that the situation in Australia has essentially not changed in the last year," locked-down Perth resident Robert Binczyk told AFP. "The slow vaccine rollout from the federal government is to blame." Cases of the Delta variant, which was first detected in India, have been reported in at least 96 territories, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Delta is expected to become the dominant variant in Europe in the coming months, but European Union authorities are banking on mass vaccinations to protect their populations from the high death tolls seen in earlier waves of the pandemic. An EU-wide COVID travel certificate, showing passengers' immunity status, comes into force on Thursday, fuelling hopes that Europe's crucial tourism industry can slowly emerge from its worst period in living memory. —AFP



BANGKOK: Airport workers wait in a queue to receive vaccinations against the COVID-19 while security personnel walk by at the departure terminal of Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok yesterday. — AFP



## International

# Trump visits US-Mexico border to highlight migrant ‘catastrophe’

## Ex-president on first major fact-finding tour since leaving White House

**WESLACO, US:** Donald Trump visits the US-Mexico border yesterday to denounce what he calls a “catastrophe” of an immigration crisis, using an underlying theme of his presidency — illegal entries — to rail against his successor Joe Biden.

Trump is on his first major fact-finding tour since leaving the White House, coming as the Biden administration grapples with a migrant surge that Trump blames squarely on an easing of his “tough but fair” policies that were aimed at deterring new arrivals. The Republican ex-president will be accompanied by Texas Governor Greg Abbott, whom Trump has endorsed for re-election next year, and who has pledged to finish Trump’s wall along the southern border, but with private donations and not federal assistance. Trump will be joined by several Republican members of Congress, including conservatives Lauren Boebert and Jim Banks, when he visits the small town of Weslaco in the Rio Grande Valley, one of the illegal migration hot spots along the 1,930-mile (3100-kilometer) border.

He received a briefing on border conditions at the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), then visit the border itself, likely at or around the nearby city of McAllen, to observe a portion of the wall. Weslaco appeared largely unfazed by the former president’s pending visit, although a pickup truck bearing Trump flags drove past the DPS.

The detention of migrants at the frontier reached its highest level in 15 years in March, and Biden critics accused the president of downplaying the situation. Republican lawmakers have slammed Biden for reversing some of Trump’s programs including his “remain in Mexico” policy, which had forced thousands of asylum seekers from Central America to stay south of the US border until their claims were processed.

### Drug trafficking

They have also warned of the surge in drug trafficking into the United States, particularly of fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid. Biden last week dispatched Vice President Kamala Harris, whom he has tasked with overseeing efforts to stem migration, to the border region where she high-



WELLINGTON: Former US President Donald Trump arrives for his campaign-style rally in Wellington. —AFP

lighted the administration’s commitment to “orderly and humane” immigration policies. Trump had claimed credit for the Harris visit, saying his own earlier border trip announcement prompted a scramble to get Harris there before him. Harris visited El Paso, a border city that Republicans argue is hundreds of miles from the epicenter of the migration crisis.

Trump, who may yet seek re-election in 2024 but has not announced his plans, has repeatedly knocked Biden for the border crisis.

“There has never been, in our country’s history, a border catastrophe like what is currently taking place at our southern border,” Trump said last week, adding that all Biden had

to do “is leave it the way it was” with Trump’s tougher policies in place. Other Republicans including congresswoman Mary Miller, who is from Illinois and is visiting the border with Trump, have described the migrant surge as an “invasion” that must be stopped.

The Democratic Party has pushed back, saying Republicans were bringing their “down show” to the border to mislead voters. “Donald Trump and Republicans waged war on our immigration system, threw it into chaos, and left a 1.3 million-case backlog for President Biden and the administration to clean up,” Democratic National Committee rapid response director Ammar Moussa said in a statement. —AFP

## Seven dead, 11 missing in Bali ferry sinking

**DENPASER:** Indonesian rescuers were searching for 11 people still missing after a passenger ferry sank off the coast of Bali in rough seas, killing at least seven, authorities said yesterday. Dozens of survivors were plucked from the water Tuesday evening after the KMP Yunicee, carrying 57 passengers and crew, went down near Gilimanuk port at the western end of the holiday island.

It had been travelling across a narrow strait from Java island. But 11 people remained missing yesterday while authorities confirmed that they had pulled seven dead from the waters, updating an earlier toll. “We are still searching for the missing,” said Bali search and rescue chief Gede Darmada.

“Last night, the rescue was hampered by low visibility and high waves.” It was unclear what caused the accident. Marine accidents are common in Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands, where many use ferries and other boats to travel despite poor safety standards. In 2018, about 160 people drowned when a ferry sank into the depths of one of the world’s deepest lakes on Sumatra island. And more than 300 people are estimated to have drowned in 2009 when a ferry sank between Sulawesi and Borneo. —AFP



DIMAS DHANI: A rescuer shows off life jackets recovered from the sea yesterday after the KMP Yunicee, a passenger ferry carrying 57 passengers and crew, sank off the coast of Bali island, killing at least seven. —AFP

## Taiwan boy thrown 27 times in judo class dies

**TAIPEI:** A seven-year-old Taiwanese boy who was in a coma for over two months after he was repeatedly thrown to the floor during a judo class has died, a hospital said yesterday. The boy, who was only identified by his family name Huang, was rushed to Feng Yuan Hospital in central Taichung city on April 21 after he was reportedly thrown 27 times by his judo coach.

He had been in a coma for 70 days with brain hemorrhages and developed respiratory problems as well as multiple organ failure before his parents decided to take him off life support on Tuesday, a hospital official told AFP. His coach, identified by his surname Ho, was indicted earlier this month on charges of inflicting severe injuries on children and using children to commit



YANGON: Protesters hold up their mobile phones during a candlelight vigil to honor those who have died during demonstrations against the military coup in Yangon. —AFP

## ‘Revolution Love’ sweeps Myanmar protest barricades

**YANGON:** With bars shuttered, universities empty and hook-up apps poleaxed by internet blackouts, dating got much harder in post-coup Myanmar, but young people are still finding love—often in the heady rush of anti-junta protests. Since the military seized power in February, ousting civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and ending a decade-long experiment with democracy, outrage on the streets has been met with a brutal crackdown on dissent.

Among protesters who came of age during Myanmar’s flirtation with parliamentary rule, “Taw Lan Yay Puu Sar”—“Revolution Love” in Burmese—is thriving alongside the anger and despair, making and breaking relationships. “Meeting someone at a protest is very different and I think it is more exciting,” Zan, a 19-year-old student who met his girlfriend at an anti-junta demonstration in February, told AFP.

They got chatting after he offered her some oranges during a protest.

A few days later she contacted him on Facebook. They started going to protests together, and romance blossomed against the backdrop of gunfire, burning tires and chaos of the junta’s intensifying crackdown. “It is hard because you never know what is going to

happen,” said Zan, who only wanted to give his first name. “We are always scared of when we will get shot. We could get arrested, or something could happen at any moment.” The lovebirds had a close call in March when police suddenly broke through the barricade they were sheltering behind, sending them fleeing for a safehouse where they had to hide for several hours. “When I am at a protest, it is not just me, but she is with me,” Zan said.

“So, when I must run, I will also make sure she gets to safety with me.” Stories like his have spawned a “Revolution Love” hashtag, with young protesters sharing stories, memes and viral posts of young love against the junta.

### ‘Life and death’

Pro-democracy posters and the three-fingered salute associated with anti-military rallies have appeared frequently in Tinder profiles after the generals restored access to the dating app last month. Politics had always been a thorny issue for Kay and her girlfriend—before the coup she had backed a pro-military party, while her partner was a supporter of Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy.

But after the coup, the 23-year-old law student from Myanmar’s north was “on the people’s side,” she told AFP, going to protests with her partner. Her partner broke up with her in the middle of March—“without any reason,” she says, suspecting that politics may have had something to do with it. Her suspicions were confirmed by the end of the month, when she heard her partner had met someone else at a protest which the police had broken up violently.—AFP



### News in brief

#### Man who killed 5 faces trial

**WASHINGTON:** A gunman who shot dead five people in the offices of a Maryland newspaper appeared Tuesday before a jury that will have to decide whether he spends the rest of his life in prison or a mental hospital. Armed with a shotgun, Jarrod Ramos burst into the newsroom of the Capital Gazette in Annapolis, an hour outside of the capital Washington, on June 28, 2018, where he killed four journalists and a sales assistant before being arrested. It was one of the worst attacks on a media outlet in the United States, and sent shock waves through the country. —AFP

#### UN prolongs Mali peacekeeping

**UNITED NATIONS:** The UN Security Council on Tuesday extended its Mali peacekeeping mission until the end of June 2022, insisting on a return to civilian rule and for elections on February 27. The resolution drafted by France to that effect was adopted unanimously and provides for a renewed mandate for the MINUSMA peacekeeping mission at its current strength of maximum 13,289 soldiers and 1,920 police. After announcing the end of its Barkhane mission in the war-torn Sahel state, former colonial power France had hoped to be able to increase the strength of MINUSMA by a few thousand peacekeepers but the June 30 deadline for the end of the mission came too soon for it to secure a green light from the US Congress for extra UN spending in Mali. —AFP

#### Two protesters shot dead in Ghana

**ACCRA:** Two protesters were shot dead and four were wounded in clashes with security forces in Ghana’s southern Ashanti region, police and a health official said yesterday. The protesters were demonstrating against the death of a popular youth activist, Ibrahim “Kaaka” Mohammed, when they were confronted by police and soldiers on Tuesday in the town of Ejura. “Two people died during the clashes,” said police spokesman Godwin Ahianyo. Police were investigating the incident and calm had been restored to the area, he said. —AFP

#### Spain ‘no’ to Catalonia vote

**MADRID:** Spain’s ruling Socialists will “never” allow an independence referendum in Catalonia, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said yesterday, as his government prepares to resume negotiations with Catalan separatists. His comments come a week after nine Catalan political leaders were pardoned and freed from jail for their part in the northeastern region’s failed push for independence in 2017. “There will be no referendum on self-determination,” Sanchez told parliament, saying his Socialist party would “never accept this type of deviation.” —AFP

#### Putin opposes mandatory jabs

**MOSCOW:** President Vladimir Putin said yesterday he opposed introducing mandatory vaccinations in Russia despite a surge in coronavirus infections in the country and sluggish inoculation rates. “I do not support mandatory vaccinations,” Putin told Russians during his annual phone-in broadcast on television. Asked if he supported a new nationwide lockdown, he said regional authorities were instead promoting localized mandatory vaccinations and other measures to avoid introducing new quarantines. —AFP

#### Zuma in ‘high spirits’ after sentence

**JOHANNESBURG:** South Africa’s former president Jacob Zuma was in “high spirits” yesterday, a day after the country’s top court handed him a 15-month jail sentence, an aide said. In an unprecedented ruling, the Constitutional Court on Tuesday convicted Zuma for “egregious” and “aggravated” contempt of court after he refused to appear before graft investigators. If Zuma fails to turn himself in by Sunday, police will be ordered to arrest him and take him to prison. —AFP

#### IS claims first suicide blast in DRC

**PARIS:** The Islamic State (IS) group has claimed its first suicide attack in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a jihadist monitoring site said. IS claimed responsibility for a suicide blast in Beni in North Kivu province by a man named as “Abu Khadijah” who targeted “Christian disbelievers at a liquor bar”, according to the US-based SITE intelligence Group, which monitors extremist groups. IS also claimed responsibility for an explosion at a church in the same town on Sunday, as well as three other attacks on security forces in Ituri province to the north, SITE said late Tuesday. —AFP



THURSDAY, JULY 1, 2021

# Business

## Pandemic lifts sales of wearable gadgets

‘Everybody is more health-focused and wearables are a good device to assist with that’

**BARCELONA:** Earphones embedded in pearl earrings, a smartwatch that measures body temperature, a diamond ring that monitors sleep patterns: The wearable gadgets market has boomed as the pandemic boosts interest in health monitoring and working from home.

While worldwide sales of smartphones slumped last year, a record 527 million wearables were sold in 2020, up from 384 million in 2019, according to research firm Strategy Analytics.

It was the first time that global wearable sales topped half a billion and analysts expect the trend to continue, with the firm forecasting the devices will overtake smartphone sales by the end of the decade.

The surge in wearables sales was in focus at the four-day Mobile World Congress, the telecom industry's biggest annual gathering, which wraps today in Barcelona.

Ear-worn devices such as earbuds, which can be used to make calls and listen to music, accounted for nearly two-thirds of global wearable sales last year as people working from home upgraded their headphones for video calling.

Wristwear such as fitness trackers and smartwatches, which can monitor steps, the heart rate and even oxygen levels, accounted for 36 percent of

worldwide wearable sales, as people paid more attention to their health during the pandemic and exercise moved outdoors since gyms were closed in many places.

“Everybody is becoming much more health focused and wearables are a good device to assist with that,” said Neil Mawston, an executive director at Strategy Analytics.

### More features

Falling prices and new features and shapes for wearables were also helping to deliver stronger sales, analysts said.

Chinese tech giant Huawei for example launched a new flagship smartwatch ahead of the congress which for the first time includes a high-precision sensor to detect skin temperature.

“We expect device makers to keep adding more sensors to devices,” said Leo Gebbie, senior wearables analyst at consultancy CCS Insight, which expects 1.2 billion devices to be in use worldwide by the end of 2025.

“It will be interesting to see what else can be added to smartwatches because I think people will want to see more features.”

While the wearables market is dominated by big firms such as Apple and Samsung, smaller companies that focus on specific markets are “fuelling

growth”, said Ramon Llamas, wearables research director at market research firm IDC.

Indian consumer electronics firm boAt for example has become the world's fifth biggest wearables supplier by focusing solely on the Indian market with its budget wireless earbuds, he said.

But with companies releasing new devices at a faster rate, Gebbie warned there often appears to be little to separate them out, especially at the lower end of the market where “wearable devices increasingly seem to be much of a muchness”.

### ‘Sea change’

Better design is also helping to boost the appeal of wearables. The tumbling size of components and batteries has made it possible to make smaller and sleeker wearables that often do not look like an electronic device.

German firm NOVA for example displayed at the congress its wireless earphones which are embedded in clip-on pearl earrings that allow users to listen to music and make calls.

The device uses patented technology than can send sound from your earlobe directly to your ear canal without any sound leakage.



BARCELONA, Catalonia: People visit the Mobile World Congress (MWC) fair in Barcelona yesterday. —AFP

Finnish health technology firm Oura has put out a wedding-band sized ring that tracks the wearer's activity — including sleep, steps, heart rate and body temperature.

The device, which comes in different metals including a top-end diamond studded one, caught the attention of major sports teams in the United States as well as Britain's Prince Harry who has been spotted wearing it.

But Gebbie of CCS Insight said consumers have gotten used to the look of wearables and the need “for them to blend in” has “disappeared a bit”.

“When smartwatches were still fairly new, there was a certain stigma around wearing one, it was seen maybe as a bit geeky or a bit nerdy. I think there has been a bit of a sea change in terms of how people feel about them,” he added. —AFP

## IMF approves \$2.5bn loan, debt relief for Sudan

**WASHINGTON:** The IMF on Tuesday approved a \$2.5 billion loan for Sudan, and with the World Bank sealed a landmark deal that unlocks nearly \$50 billion in debt relief for the impoverished African nation.

The announcement came after the International Monetary Fund finalized an agreement with 101 donor countries allowing Sudan to clear roughly \$1.4 billion in arrears to the Washington-based lender—the key hurdle to allow access to fresh aid.

“We congratulate the Sudanese government and people for their commendable hard work and progress toward this remarkable milestone,” IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva and World Bank President David Malpass said in a joint statement.

Payment of the arrears is the “decision point” that allows access to debt relief under the Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative which the officials said will cover \$50 billion or about 90 percent of the country's foreign debt. Sudan will receive \$1.4 billion immediately under the 39-month IMF loan program.

### ‘Historic’ agreement

Washington welcomed the announcement that Sudan is now eligible to receive debt relief from the international lending institutions.

“This is a historic moment for Sudan and its people,” US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement.

“These steps will unlock much-needed financing and will help build the foundation for poverty reduction, inclusive development, and economic growth.”

Yellen also praised the efforts of Sudan's civilian government to stabilize the economy.

The new aid comes amid a rapprochement between the United States and Sudan following the ouster of strongman Omar al-Bashir, who was toppled amid street protests in April 2019 after three decades of iron-fisted rule marked by economic hardship, deep internal conflicts, and biting international sanctions that curtailed investment.

In the past two years, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, a seasoned UN economist-turned-premier, has pushed to rebuild the crippled economy and end Sudan's international isolation.

Washington in December removed Sudan from its blacklist of state sponsors of terrorism, removing a major hurdle to foreign investment.

President Joe Biden has continued the thaw in relations since taking office in January, and his administration has taken a leading role in encouraging other governments to join in the effort to provide debt relief.

The US Treasury in March announced \$1.15 billion in bridge financing to help clear Sudan's arrears at the World Bank, after Khartoum's civilian-backed government announced a series of reforms. Treasury said the United States also committed to contribute up to \$120 million in grant resources to fund IMF debt relief for Sudan under the first phase of HIPC.

Sudan is the last country to clear arrears with the IMF, which now faces no repayment arrears from its members for the first time since early 1974. Georgieva praised the government's “strong policy commitment” that has shored up public finances “while channeling assistance to the most vulnerable.”

But she said “continued reform commitment will be critical to achieve the program's objectives, as well as to reduce poverty and secure higher and more inclusive growth.” —AFP

## US urges delay to EU digital tax plan

**BRUSSELS:** The United States is urgently requesting the EU delay a bloc-wide digital tax, warning it could torpedo international talks to overhaul global taxation, according to a US diplomatic document seen by AFP yesterday.

The argument has been made over recent days in a discreet but strongly argued diplomatic outreach by Washington to a handful of EU capitals, diplomats said on condition of anonymity. The EU levy, due to be announced by the European Commission on July 14, “threatens the work being undertaken via the OECD/G20 process,” said the US document.

“We urge you to work with the European Council and the European Commission” to delay its release, the document added, referring to the European institutions that will carry through the EU's plan.

Its timing “would risk entirely derailing the negotiations at a sensitive juncture,” the US added.

Negotiations involving 139 countries are currently under way at the OECD in Paris to strike an

## UK economy shrinks more than expected in first quarter

**LONDON:** Britain's coronavirus-hit economy shrank by slightly more than expected in the first quarter before a subsequent easing of lockdown restrictions, revised official data showed yesterday. Gross domestic product contracted by 1.6 percent in the three months to the end of March, down from the previous figure of 1.5 percent, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

“Today's updated GDP figures show the same picture as our earlier estimate with schools, hospitality and retail all hit by the re-imposition of the lockdown in January and February, with some recovery in March,” said ONS deputy national statistician Jonathan Athow.

“With many services unavailable, households again saved at record levels.” The UK government reimposed England's lockdown in early January, but began lifting restrictions at the start of March with the reopening of schools.

Under a phased reopening, bars and restaurants restarted outdoor dining in April and indoor services in May. Non-essential retail stores also opened back up in April. The economy is expected to fully reopen on July 19, after the government delayed the date by four weeks due to surging Delta infections.

## Nordic banks to merge mobile payment apps

**OSLO:** A group of banks in Denmark, Finland and Norway said yesterday they plan to merge their mobile pay-

ment apps to create one of the biggest services of its kind in Europe. Denmark's Danske Bank said in a statement that it will merge its MobilePay app with Vipps, which is operated by a consortium of Norwegian banks, and Pivo, which is owned by Finnish financial services provider, OP Financial Group.

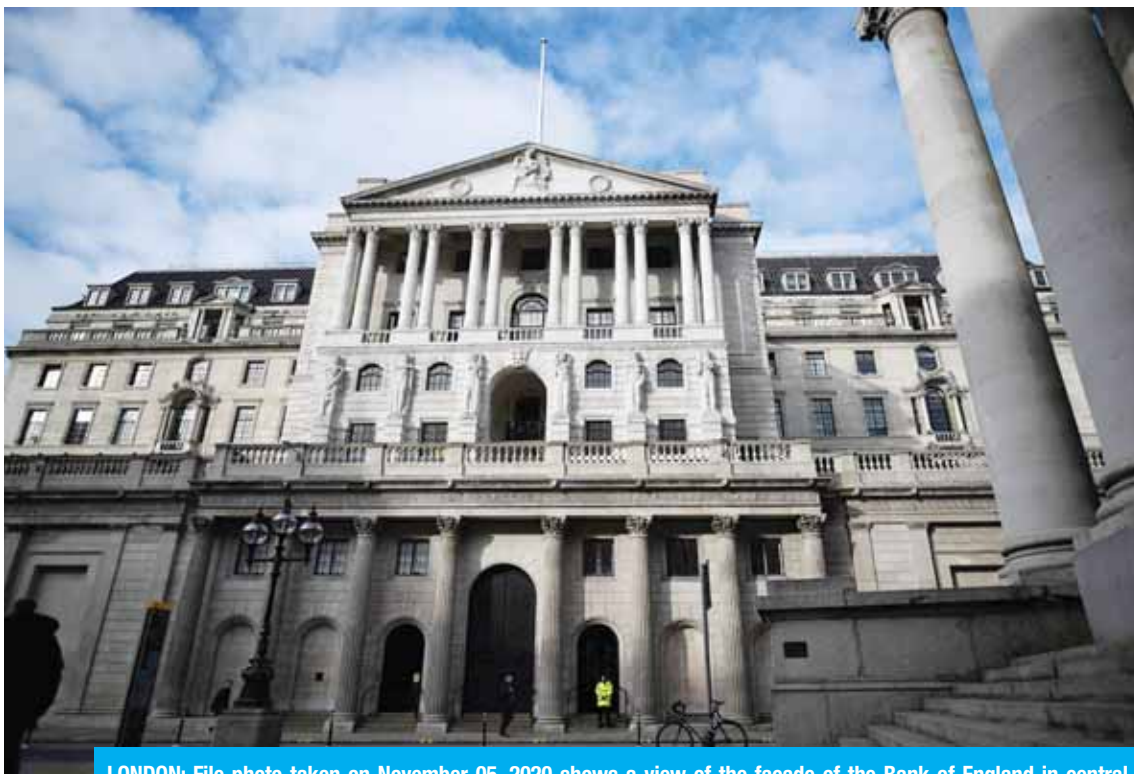
“Serving 11 million users and over 330,000 shops and web shops, the

company will be one of the largest bank-owned mobile payment providers in Europe,” Danske Bank said. The combined company, with a workforce of 500 and headquartered in Oslo, will be 65 percent owned by the Norwegian banks behind Vipps, 25 percent by Danske Bank and 10 percent by OP Financial Group, the statement said.

Vipps chief executive Rune Garborg will head the joint venture. “To be com-

petitive in a global payment market we need to make more of an impact, and the merger will give us the competitiveness we need,” Garborg said. Vipps said the new service will allow cross-border payments.

The banks said they expected the deal to receive final regulatory approval, including from the European Commission, “in the second half of 2021 or in early 2022.” —AFP



LONDON: File photo taken on November 05, 2020 shows a view of the facade of the Bank of England in central London. —AFP

The ONS added yesterday that economic activity in the first quarter was 8.8 percent below its pre-pandemic level from late 2019. “The small downward revision to Q1 GDP growth probably won't stop the economy from

rising back to its pre-pandemic peak in the coming months,” noted Capital Economics analyst Paul Dales. “And the larger rebound in the household saving rate increases the potential for faster rises in GDP further ahead.” —AFP



## Business

# China factory activity edges down in June on tight supplies

## Economy on recovery track after overcoming the impact of virus

**BEIJING:** Chinese factory activity stabilised in June, data showed yesterday, but output was hit by supply shortages of key commodities and microchips as well as the coronavirus-induced closure of a key port that caused huge delivery delays.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), a key gauge of manufacturing activity in the world's second-largest economy, came in at 50.9 in June from May's 51.0, the National Bureau of Statistics said.

While the reading has been edging down for three straight months, it appears to be levelling out. It was also broadly in line with forecasts and continued to stay above the 50 point mark that separates growth from expansion.

China's economy is well on the recovery track after overcoming the impact of

the virus early by imposing strict lockdowns and mass testing. But production activities have been hit by "a tight supply of chips, coal and power, as well as equipment maintenance," said NBS senior statistician Zhao Qinghe.

"Factors such as chip shortages have adversely affected the development of the (automobile) industry," Zhao added, even as the new order index rose overall.

Iris Pang, ING's chief economist for Greater China, said: "The chip shortage is a longer term issue that will affect overall production activities... anything that uses electricity nowadays has a chip or more inside it."

Separately, Yantian port in the southern trade hub of Shenzhen stopped accepting new export containers for six days in May after a local infection cluster involving port workers-stifling trade at a

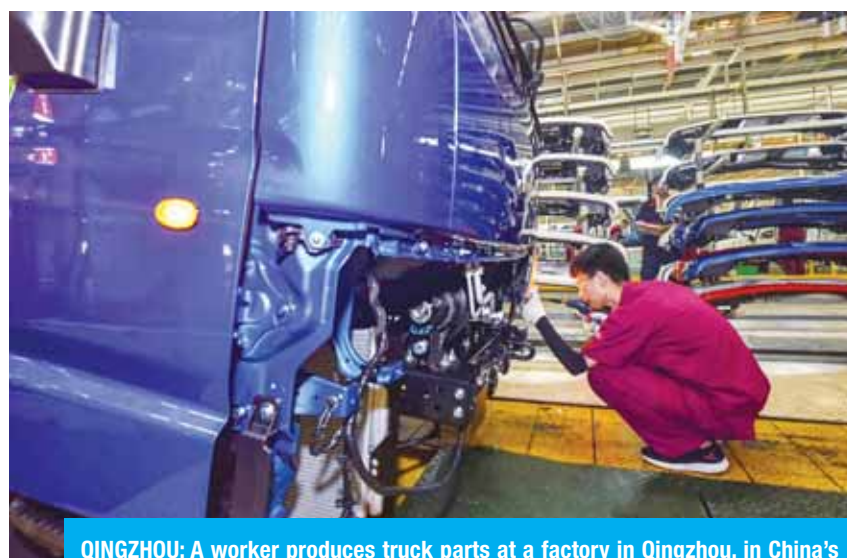
key point of the stressed global shipping network.

Shipping giant Maersk warned last week that the backlog would take weeks to clear.

Capital Economics analysts said in a recent report that manufacturing PMIs were likely to have nudged down with demand starting to level off and "supply constraints likely worsened in part due to the closure of the Yantian port during the first three weeks of June".

China's non-manufacturing PMI fell as well to 53.5 this month, although it was still well above the mark separating growth from contraction.

Although the service industry maintained a trend of recovery, boosted by a mid-year shopping festival, business activities were hit by local outbreaks, Zhao from the NBS said. —AFP



**QINGZHOU:** A worker produces truck parts at a factory in Qingzhou, in China's eastern Shandong province yesterday. —AFP

## CBK attends BIS 91st annual general meeting

**KUWAIT:** The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) on Tuesday attended the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) 91st annual general meeting. It is the second consecutive year that CBK attends as a shareholding institution. The meeting agenda included approving the audited financial statements of the BIS and the proposed dividend and profit allocation for the financial year 2020/21.

The Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Dr Mohammad Y. Al-Hashel stated that "CBK's membership comes in line of pursuing its goal to strengthen relationships with international financial institutions, and to fortify its role in developing monetary and prudential policies. The BIS, owned by member central banks, provides central banks a forum for dialogue and broad international cooperation to pursue global monetary and financial stability. It also provides a platform for responsible

innovation and knowledge sharing, and in-depth analysis and insights on core monetary and macro-prudential policy issues."

Al-Hashel clarified that the CBK engages with the BIS in a multitude of ways with varying levels of representation. The CBK has participated in various Governors' meetings held to promote global cooperation and dialogue. Additionally, Kuwaiti employees partake in meetings and workgroups held by the BIS Innovation Network and Cyber Resilience Coordination Center to collaborate with their counterparts at international central banks on financial innovation while identifying and minimizing the associated risks.

On policy matters, the CBK is engaged with various BIS-hosted international groups and committees involved in standard setting and the pursuit of financial stability including The Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, and Financial Stability Board and the Financial Stability Institute. CBK also sits at both the Irving Fisher Committee on Central Bank Statistics and Central Bank Governance Network to tap into knowledge sharing on statistical topics and governance issues.

The Governor elaborated that the BIS was established in 1930, and is the oldest international



financial institution. The CBK joined the BIS in 2020 to be one of the 63 member central banks including both advanced and developed economies that together account for approximately 95% of the world's GDP. Notably, members of the BIS have equal rights of voting and representation at general meetings. Its head office is in Basel, Switzerland, with representative offices in both Hong Kong and Mexico City and five Innovation Hub centers. It offers banking services to members of the central bank community.



**Mubarak Naser Al Sayer, CEO at Al Sayer, seen with other officials during the ribbon cutting ceremony.**



**Mubarak Naser Al Sayer with Bahrah Trading Company team**

## BTC opens upgraded maintenance center at Ahmadi

**KUWAIT:** Part of the strategic expansion of the group towards delivering quicker service to the growing business sector in the governorate, Bahrah Trading Company (BTC), a subsidiary of Al Sayer Holding has opened their upgraded maintenance center at Ahmadi.

The opening ceremony was held in the presence of Mubarak Naser Al Sayer, CEO at Al Sayer and Elie Andraos, General Manager BTC along with team members from Bahrah Sales, Service and Spare Parts Department. Speaking during the occasion Mubarak Al Sayer said "Ahmadi is strategic location for our franchise brands specialized in several sectors including oil, construction, contracting,

So, it is important for us to be closer to our customers, to provide the best level of service. This center consists of spare parts outlet as well as workshop for repair and maintenance. We are optimistic to achieve success with the opening of this center, we are ready to welcome our customers to offer them excellent service".

"The main objective of this project is to enhance the capacity of the center to receive more customers. Ahmadi is strategic location for Kuwait economy as it includes oil and petroleum companies as well as construction sector, so we can do better and faster service, fulfil the needs of our customers being closer to them" commented Elie Andraos.

The upgraded maintenance center features customer reception and parts storage area and the enhanced workspace include:

- 2315 m2 service garage.
- special roofed workshop with cemented flooring.
- equipped with advanced tools and wash bay.
- 471 m2 Air-Conditioned Parts Warehouse with storage capacity of close to 6000-line items.

Thanks to its solid financial position and strong financial results posted, NBK ranked 156th globally in The Banker's list of Top 1000 World Banks.

The Banker magazine mentioned that the average return on assets (ROA) for the banks of the Middle Banks recorded 0.87% in 2020, while the return on equity (ROE) was 7.32%, and the return on capital (ROC) reached 7.88%.

By the end of 2020, aggregate Tier 1 capital held by the world's 1000 largest banks stood at \$9.9tn, the highest total on record, and a 12.7% increase compared to the year before, it added.

The selection of NBK on this list is a testimony of its leadership at the regional and global levels, as well as its strong balance sheet and outperformance of regional banks in terms of many key financial indicators, despite the challenging conditions posed by the coronavirus pandemic. Additionally, this listing among top world banks reflects the bank's profit quality, depending on solid metrics across all its business lines, as well as its unique geographical footprint spanning 4 continents and 15 countries worldwide.

It is worth mentioning that over the past year, and in recognition of its efforts in supporting customers and employees, NBK was one of the few banks around the world to be recognized by a num-

- supported by highly skilled technicians and Parts personnel.

"Now we can receive 10 equipment at the same time for quick service and we have also enhanced the Spare Parts outlets and developed the services as an exclusive benefit for our customers from Bahrah Trading Company" added Elie.

BTC has extensive parts distribution centers at Key Locations in Kuwait, it was imperative to have a distribution centre close to the major fleet owners who cater to the petroleum sector in Kuwait. Implementing KAIZEN standards for better space optimization, will ensure 90%, first pick availability for all major franchisees, in addition to shorter delivery periods.

Congratulating the team Bengt Schultz Chief Operating Officer "Now we will serve our customers in a more welcoming environment that also offers more capacity. This is one small example on how we continue to improve our business and ability to serve customers even when the times are more challenging".



ber of prestigious awards in the areas of innovation in digital banking services, and also scored a high rating in customer satisfaction index.

Meanwhile, NBK continues to collectively enjoy one of the highest credit ratings among most major banks of the Middle East from the top three international credit rating agencies: Moody's, Fitch and Standard & Poor's. The Bank's ratings are supported by its strong capitalization, prudent lending policies, disciplined approach to risk management, as well as its highly experienced and very stable management team.

The Banker is a UK-based Financial Times publication founded in 1926. It is one of the most reputable financial intelligence magazines that conducts surveys to select and recognize top performing and leading banks worldwide.

## Huawei highlights 5G as a key player for brighter global future

**DUBAI:** During MWC Barcelona 2021, Huawei Executive Director and President of Carrier BG, Ryan Ding delivered a keynote speech Innovation: Lighting up the Future. In his keynote, Ding said that innovation in ICT is becoming a key driver of the global economy and its value is moving beyond the telecoms industry. Ongoing innovation in 5G, in particular, will bring more value to operators, the ICT industry, and the global economy, and will light up the future of every industry.



**Ryan Ding**

The pandemic, Ding said, has created a new normal in which the digital economy is the driving force for the global economy. ICT infrastructure, as the cornerstone of the digital economy, is playing an increasingly important role. Ding mentioned that the value of ICT now transcends the telecoms industry and has transformative implications for the global economy as a whole.

In countries where 5G is developing faster, operators have seen faster revenue growth, and these countries also tend to have better digital infrastructure overall. Taking China as an example, in less than 18 months, more than 820,000 5G base stations have been deployed, and Chinese operators achieved a 6.5% increase in revenue and a 5.6% increase in net profits in the first quarter this year. The rapid development of digital infrastructure driven by 5G will add EUR1.9 trillion to the Chinese economy in the next five years. The same stories are also unfolding in South Korea and Europe.

As ICT infrastructure is the cornerstone of the digital economy in the 5G era, operators are playing a more important role than they used to. Ding said, "Currently, the major goal of operators in 5G is to achieve business success in three key markets - consumers, homes, and industries - through innovation in network deployment, market development, and operation optimization."

Today, 5G has been applied in over 1,000 projects in more than 20 industries including steel and mining, enabling safer and more efficient production. "We've learned from Chinese operators' experience that the success of 5GtoB depends on three factors," said Ding. "First, selecting the right industries. Operators should choose target industries by looking at four factors: demand, affordability, replicability, and technical feasibility. Second, defining the scope of your offerings. Operators can serve as network providers that offer connectivity services. They can also serve as cloud service providers, or even system integrators that provide end-to-end integration services. Different roles require different skill sets and yield different business value. Third, designing innovative business models. This is key to replicating 5GtoB success at scale."

"5G success first requires a 5G network that provides the best user experience, and this guides how we innovate at Huawei," said Ding.

Concluding his keynote, Ding emphasized that 5G development requires ongoing innovation. In 5GtoB, for example, 5G standards need to be coordinated with industry standards at a faster rate, and 5G should be integrated into enterprises' core production processes to help them go digital and intelligent. At the same time, the synergy between 5G, cloud, and computing will further expand the boundaries of operators' business, creating space for new growth. 5G innovation is an ongoing process. Huawei believes that innovation will light up the future.

During MWC Barcelona 2021, Huawei launched a series of 5G products and solutions oriented to "1+N" 5G target networks. Supercharged by industry-leading innovation, these products and solutions will help promote multi-antenna technology to all bands and all scenarios to build leading 5G networks. The products included: Industry's only 400 MHz Ultra-Wideband 64T64R Massive MIMO, Industry's Lightest 64T64R Massive MIMO, BladeAAU Pro: Industry's Only 64T A+P Solution, BladeRRU Pro: Industry's Only RF Unit That Supports Three Low and Three Medium Bands, and Industry's Only Commercial FDD Massive MIMO.

Yang Chaobin, President of Huawei Wireless Product Line, said: "By launching this series, we aim to bring multi-antenna technology to all scenarios and bands. Several products within the solutions are one-of-a-kind and will help operators efficiently deploy 5G networks and provide first-rate experience. Huawei will work with global partners to innovate and share 5G benefits with all."



## Business

# White gold gamble: Togo turns to private sector for cotton revival

## Cotton also has huge potential in terms of job creation

**TOME:** In a bold but contested strategy, the West African state of Togo has bet heavily on the private sector to revive its struggling cotton industry. "White gold," as cotton is sometimes called, accounts for only between one and 4.3 percent of the country's GDP, bringing 500,000 jobs for a population of 8.8 million.

Yet cotton also has huge potential in terms of job creation, especially for the poorest and smallest producers in the marginalised north. Eyeing the success of privatisation in neighbouring Benin, Togo last December sold a majority stake in its largest cotton producer, the New Cotton Company of Togo (NSCT), to a Singaporean giant.

NSCT says it aims to produce 135,000 tonnes next year and 225,000 by 2025 — a target that many say is a big ask. Production in the 2020-21 season was a meagre 67,000 tonnes, amounting to a dramatic 43 percent decrease over 2019-20. Many farmers switched to corn and soy as the NSCT lowered the price for a kilogram of raw cotton from 265 CFA francs (\$0.48) in the 2019-2020 season to

225 CFA francs (\$0.48 to \$0.40) the following year.

"At least 40,000 cotton producers out of 153,000 abandoned their fields this last season," said Koussouwe Kouroufei, president of the National Federation of Cotton Farmers' Associations (FNGPC). The 2020-21 harvest suffered from "poor seed quality and bad weather in the north of the country," NSCT chairman Simfeitchou Pre said.

Togo has cast envious eyes at its neighbour Benin, where privatisation has helped cotton output to rise from 324,000 tonnes in 2015-2016 to 700,000 tonnes last year. The transformation has been engineered by Benin's President Patrice Talon, a tycoon known as the "Cotton King" before he was elected in 2016. Benin is now the biggest cotton producer in the region, with the sector making up 12 percent of GDP.

### Price support

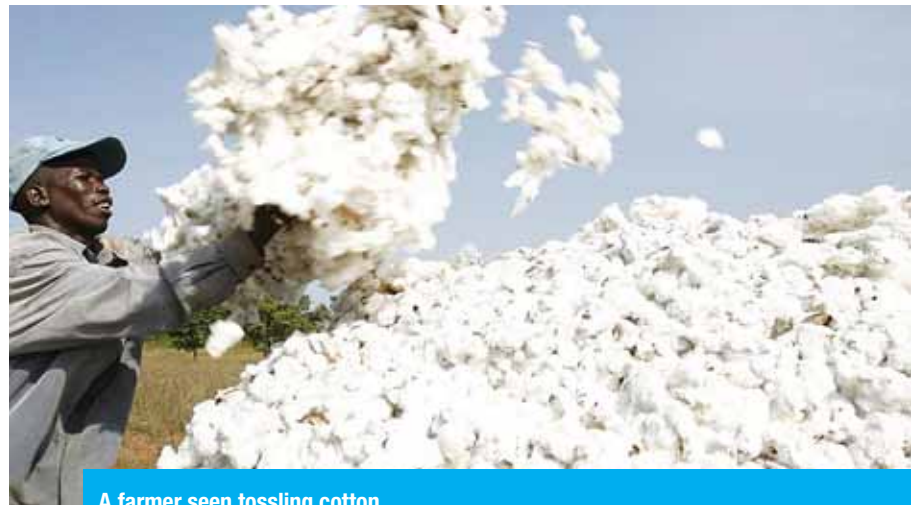
Togo last December sold 51 percent of its shares in NSCT to Singapore-based agricultural conglomerate Olam International. Owned by Japan's Mitsubishi and Singapore's sovereign fund Temasek,

Olam International is present in 60 countries, with a hefty focus on agri-business in Africa.

The state of Togo has retained 24 percent of NSCT shares and the farmers' association 25 percent. Under its new terms of operation, NSCT will be responsible for all cotton activities in the country, including supporting producers with fertilisers, ginning and sale.

The company says it will raise the floor price of raw cotton to 254 CFA francs (\$0.46) per kilo to encourage production. International cotton prices have rebounded this year, peaking at 93 cents per pound (0.45 kilo) in February — almost double from its lowest point in 2020. A processing factory is also being built in a new industrial zone, Adetikope, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) south of the capital Lome, with a capacity to transform 5,000 tonnes of fibre by 2022 and 25,000 tonnes over the new three years.

"We are hopeful that the new season will offer brighter perspectives for the entire industry," Martin Drevon, deputy director general in charge of operations at



A farmer seen tossing cotton.

NSCT, told AFP. But some fret about the long-term impact from opening the door to multinational giants. They fear a loss of sovereignty.

"If we don't step up, in five years all of Togo's cotton will be in the hands of this

group," said Emmanuel Sogadji, president of Togo's consumer association (LCT). "And it's not just cotton. It's the same for soy and other agricultural products. Even in a liberal economy, we should promote domestic investors." —AFP



## Jazeera Airways announces flights to Antalya and Kyiv

**KUWAIT:** Jazeera Airways prepares to launch flights to Turkey's coastal city of Antalya starting from July 2nd as well as to the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv starting from July 13th. Flights to each destination are scheduled twice weekly. As restrictions on travel start to ease and vaccinations continue to roll out worldwide, the airline has already announced new services that cater to travelers looking for new touristic destinations to explore as well as cities marked "safe" from COVID-19.

Jazeera Chief Executive Officer, Rohit Ramchandran, said: "Jazeera has a number of unique destinations lined up for travel this summer. Following the launch of flights to London Heathrow, Bodrum, Trabzon, Istanbul, Bishkek and Tashkent, we're introducing Antalya and Kyiv for families to enjoy once again their summer vacation and avid travelers to discover new places. Antalya offers them a great getaway over the turquoise coast of Turkey, while Kyiv and the rest of Ukraine presents a history and culture that is waiting to be discovered."

Flights to Antalya land at Antalya Airport (AYT) every Monday and Friday, while flights to Kyiv land at Kyiv International Airport - Zhuliany (IEV) every Tuesday and Friday while the return from Kyiv is scheduled on the following day.

When booking at [jazeeraairways.com](http://jazeeraairways.com), fares are inclusive of a PCR test mandated upon arrival at Jazeera Terminal 5 at Kuwait International Airport. Passengers should review Covid-19 regulations before booking to ensure compliance with local regulations on vaccination and PCR test certificates.

### Travel advisory for passengers returning to Kuwait

Passengers travelling out of Kuwait should ensure they carry their vaccination certificate if they hold a Kuwaiti citizenship, while passengers holding all other nationalities will need to present their vaccination or PCR test certificate. At the time of this announcement, entry into Kuwait is presently limited to passengers holding a Kuwaiti citizenship, their first-degree relatives and domestic workers. Starting August 1, 2021, new regulations for entry to have been announced by the Government of Kuwait, mandating that returning residents have valid proof of vaccination. Passengers are requested to review these regulations to ensure they comply with local regulations.

### Safety measures

Jazeera has also implemented many other measures to ensure the safety of passengers since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its expanding fleet of Airbus A320neo aircraft are all equipped with high-grade HEPA air filters. Every safety and precautionary measure is also a standard today on its aircraft and at Jazeera Terminal T5 in Kuwait.

## DHAMAN to play an important role in health sector

**KUWAIT:** The Ordinary General Assembly (GA) of the Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) was held yesterday at the Company's headquarters, with an attendance percentage of (80.683%). The meeting reviewed the most important advancements in the development of the company's business, the implementation of its plans, the results of the annual performance, the financial statements for the year ending on December 31, 2020, and approving the agenda.

During the beginning of the (GA), DHAMAN Chairman of the Board of Directors Mutlaq Mubarak Al-Sanea said that the healthcare sector in Kuwait witnessed great challenges during 2020, as the decline in oil prices put pressure on the government's ability to support the health sector to confront the COVID-19 pandemic, which in turn affected the usual healthcare services and negatively impacted the profitability of many healthcare organizations in Kuwait.

On the other hand, as another result of the pandemic, many health bodies, both public and private, adapted a new direction based on developing technology, promoting, accelerating digital transformation and digitization of the healthcare sector, as well as updating the quality of care to match best international practices. The health sector is currently seeing an emphasis on preventive care that will reduce lifestyle-related diseases and associated high costs of care. In addition, the sector is witnessing an emerging trend towards the development of patient-centered medical care systems, which DHAMAN has been a pioneer in adopting as a model for its business and philosophy since its inception.

Al-Sanea added that there is no doubt that the health sector in Kuwait needs considerable development and expansion to stay on track with international standards in many aspects, something which DHAMAN will play an important role in upon the commencement of its operational activities at both primary healthcare centers and hospitals. In 2019, the number of beds at government general hospitals reached 4,212, and in government specialized hospitals 3,175, with a total of 7,387. While the number of beds at private sector hospitals reached 1,084 and reached 397 at oil sector hospitals. It should be noted that the rate of beds per thousand people in the population decreased from 2.1 beds per thousand people in 2014 to 1.9 beds per 1,000 persons in 2019. This coincided with relative stability in the rate of doctors per 1,000 persons from 2.7 in 2019 compared to 2.6 in 2014. This is an important indicator of the need to develop and improve the medical sector and invest in its infrastructure, as well as proof of the significant opportunities available to take advantage of the growing demand for medical and health needs.

Al-Sanea said that despite the aftermaths of COVID-19 pandemic that affected the entire world, DHAMAN was able to face the challenges of this global crisis through determination to complete its plans and strategy with extensive efforts to achieve its vision in the health sector and complete its integrated system that contributes to the development of healthcare in Kuwait. This was implemented according to set goals through the opening of two Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs) in Farwaniya and Dhajeej during 2020, in addition to the Hawally PHC.

With launch of operations and treatment of patients commercially, DHAMAN centers experienced a large turnout of patients as a reflection of the efficiency and quality commitments enjoyed by both the medical and administrative staff. During the current year 2021, DHAMAN seeks to complete the first stage of its healthcare facilities network to reach five PHCs distributed over various areas of Kuwait according to the population density of its targeted segment.

In addition, Al-Sanea stated that the construction of DHAMAN hospitals in Ahmadi and Jahra witnessed unprecedented rates of completion in preparation for their delivery at the beginning of next year and the start of operational readiness, while cooperation with the Ministry of Health (MoH) witnessed remarkable improvement in preparation for the start of the transfer of beneficiary residents working in the private sector and their families to DHAMAN's network and healthcare facilities.

Al-Sanea reiterated that DHAMAN contributed, right from the beginning, to the COVID-19 pandemic, being one of the main components in the health sector, and in alignment with its commitment to have a pioneering role in health and its social responsibility, through a variety of programs aimed at supporting public organizations, declaring that its capabilities, facilities and medical staff would be at the disposal of the MoH and directing its media strategy towards educating a large segment of residents through cooperation with civil society institutions as well as through awareness campaigns that continued and evolved during the year. DHAMAN turned words into action by treating patients at its PHCs in full lockdown areas at the rates set by the MoH for its services, as well as providing free remote medical consultations to all segments of society. Such initiatives confirm DHAMAN's position as one of the pillars for the health sector in Kuwait.

### Financial Indicators

Although the DHAMAN did not commence its core operations

while simultaneously constructing its hospitals and preparing the PHCs required for operational activities, the Company's total assets increased to KD 205,058 million by the end of 2020 compared with KD 120,324 million by the end of 2019, an increase of about KD 85 million as a result of the increase in the volume of work-in-progress that were completed (KD 19 million), as well as the increase in the value of investment agencies by KD 69 million. The total shareholders' equity also increased to KD 190,465 million in the year 2020 from KD 111,526 million in 2019.

Al-Sanea concluded by stressing that DHAMAN has started the phase of partial operations during 2019 despite the difficult conditions of the pandemic, which was done according to plans with efficiency and recognized performance with the Company taking its suitable place in the healthcare sector. This has been through the Company's facilities, its partnerships with public and community organizations, as well as providing its health and awareness services to various segments of population. We are in the process of preparing to implement our healthcare network that was proven to be much needed during these exceptional times as we continue our determined steps to invest in infrastructure, lead the digital transformation process to increase healthcare indicators in Kuwait, achieve the Company's objectives and its operational strategy, as well as enhance shareholder equity.

On his part, DHAMAN Acting CEO, Dr Mohammad Al-Qenai said that despite the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the serious repercussions it caused, DHAMAN continued to perform according to its strategic and operational plans, driven by the determination of the executive management and the executive staff to confront and overcome all challenges. The year 2020 witnessed a strong launch of the Company's operational activities, the most prominent of which was the opening of two PHCs, which led to the Company having three operating PHCs in Hawally, Farwaniya and Dhajeej. The start of commercial operations by DHAMAN represented the accomplishment of one of the most important objectives of the past year, which is to generate operating revenues and increase the Company's income. This concurred with the Company being able to positively benefit from the COVID-19 pandemic emergency by significantly reducing fixed overhead expenses.

Al-Qenai explained that this was accompanied with diligent work to complete the recruitment plan and build-up the executive body of DHAMAN, as the Company succeeded in attracting and filling a large number of senior executive positions with distinguished competencies and vast experiences. In addition to continuing efforts to expand the critical highly qualified administrative and medical staff from inside and outside Kuwait in accordance with established standards to provide the highest levels of service to patients as per the operational plan of the Company's facilities during the years 2020-2021 to keep pace with plans to open additional PHCs.

### Health Assurance Hospitals

Furthermore, Al-Qenai outlined progress in building and equipping DHAMAN hospitals in Ahmadi and Jahra during the year 2020, saying that the pace has accelerated significantly, to conform with the approved schedule for delivery during early 2022, adding that despite the fact that construction activities were impacted by temporary suspension as imposed by the government as part of the measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the completion rate at the end of December 2020 reached 38%. The equipping works of DHAMAN Hospitals began through the selection of medical devices and equipment, the implementation plan of smart healthcare, and the completion of an integrated recruitment plan to hire the necessary medical and administrative staff to operate the hospitals.

For DHAMAN Hospitals in Ahmadi and Jahra, each consists of 5 floors and a basement with a total area of 86,000 square meters. Each hospital has the capacity of 300 beds for inpatients, 14 operating rooms, 21 intensive care units for adults and new-borns, laboratories, radiology department, emergency department linked to an air ambulance helipad, 80 outpatient clinics, in addition to central pharmacy and outpatients and emergency department pharmacy. Each hospital also has a car parking building with a capacity exceeding 500 cars.

### Confronting the challenge

Al-Qenai said that the start of the integrated operations phase of DHAMAN's health facilities at the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 coincided with the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic in the world as a whole, and in our homeland Kuwait in particular. With the continuation of the Company's work according to its pre-set plans to start its operational activities and develop its infrastructure, the executive management and the executive body were keen to respond to the new circumstances and adapt to them on all administrative and medical levels, thus DHAMAN was one of the first responders to the emergency, at a very early stage, to take the necessary measures internally and participate with various government bodies in facing the pandemic, out of DHAMAN's belief in its leading health, medical and social roles. Hence, DHAMAN took the initiative to announce that all its capabilities and facilities were placed at the disposal of MoH, and the company's medical staff stood at the frontlines to confront the virus, in line with assuming the responsibility entrusted to it as one of the main components of the health sector in Kuwait, and as one of the strategic projects in the development plan and the vision of "New Kuwait".



Mutlaq Al-Sanea, Chairman of the Board of Directors, seen with Dr Ahmed Al-Qenai, acting CEO and Fawaz Al-Enezi, Secretary of the Board of Directors.

Al-Qenai pointed out that DHAMAN has also proceeded to develop cooperation with civil society organizations and relevant parties, especially for educating non-Arabic-speaking communities. This included participating in the campaigns of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and distributing awareness booklets on disease prevention. Furthermore, DHAMAN launched a set of remote healthcare services to provide free medical consultations by phone and video calls to all segments of society to support all citizens and residents in staying at home to prevent the spread of infection. The Company also provided educational medical lectures in multiple languages through social media aimed at non-Arabic speaking communities. These initiatives are an indication of the importance of the role the Company plays, with its available human and institutional capabilities and healthcare facilities.

### Internal precautionary measures

Al-Qenai added that at an early stage, DHAMAN started preparations to face the outbreak of the new Coronavirus, by implementing the approved health measures in its facilities and applied the protocols of World Health Organization (WHO). The Infection Control & Prevention Committee was established to oversee the implementation of the Coronavirus response plan at DHAMAN, which developed a holistic plan that included training medical and administrative staff to handle various cases and possibilities of exposure to the virus through extensive workshops for all employees, as well as implementing virtual simulation of relevant steps and standard procedures for dealing with suspected cases. In parallel, PHCs were provided with technical preventive equipment and personal safety equipment, while awareness and prevention guidelines were distributed, and special rooms equipped with protective devices were allocated to measure temperature and vital indicators. The committee also launched an internal awareness campaign through various means about the best preventive practices that should be followed within the Company's facilities and provided personal protection supplies to all employees and visitors at all facilities. Upon the end of the full-lockdown, and in preparation for resuming work in the Company's various offices and facilities, the relevant committees prepared a return-to-work guide for DHAMAN employees and external parties.

### In cooperation with MoH

Al-Qenai added that pursuant to the recommendations of the board of directors to closely follow the developments of the virus spread and providing all forms of support and assistance to state institutions, especially the MoH, the Company assigned a number of its medical teams to be on the frontlines shoulder by shoulder with the Ministry's staff to deal with patients and suspected cases. Those qualified teams are among the ones who participated in programs and workshops within DHAMAN PHCs to deal with patients and suspected cases in accordance with the standard procedures followed, as the Company considers that its patriotic duty dictates cooperation with all bodies and institutions to overcome this crisis.

### Serving areas under lockdown

In another development, Al-Qenai affirmed DHAMAN's solid and effective participation in the efforts of MoH to confront COVID-19 pandemic, as Company medical and nursing teams were present at MoH quarantine centers during the virus peak period, to extend support and participate in the fight against the pandemic. To additionally assist in alleviating the pressure on the Ministry's facilities, DHAMAN announced that it will apply the rates of MoH at its healthcare centers in areas under the full lockdown.

### Virtual healthcare

Al-Qenai stated that the company accelerated the activation of its plans related to smart health care in light of the outbreak of the new Coronavirus and the urgent need for citizens and residents to stay in their homes, the Company quickly activated its plans and launched a set of services for virtual medical consultations under the name (Tatamman). This service contained multiple alternatives for the beneficiaries, whether by calling the hotline or direct visual contact with the qualified doctor. Consultations are provided free of charge through highly qualified medical staff specializing in family medicine and pediatric while maintaining complete patient confidentiality and privacy. Such services are part of DHAMAN's efforts to apply smart healthcare as a strategy to realize its goals and provide advanced health services.



## Lifestyle | Features

## Lebanon army offers tourists helicopter joyrides

The Lebanese army will start offering tourists helicopter joyrides this week in a bid to boost the coffers of one of the crisis-hit country's key institutions. An economic crisis that the World Bank describes as likely one of the world's worst since the 1850s has hit the Lebanese military hard, leaving it struggling to pay troops enough to live on. In an announcement on its website, the army said it would be offering civilians the chance to see "Lebanon... from above" with 15-minute flights.

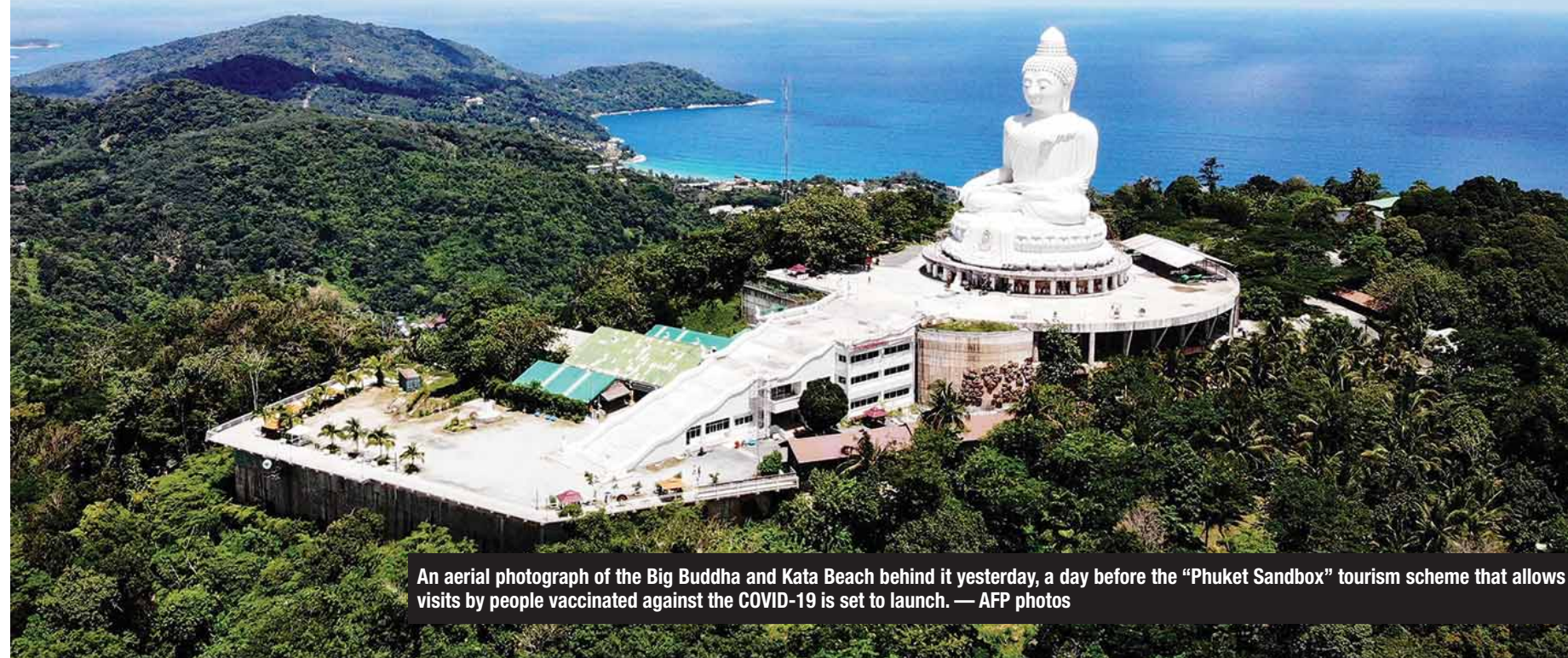
The joyrides on board the army's Robinson R44 Raven helicopters would

start today and would be open to passengers aged three and above. Up to three people would be allowed aboard per flight, which costs about \$150 and is to be paid in cash. The aim is "to encourage Lebanese tourism in a new way, in addition to supporting the air force," a military source told AFP. The economic crisis has eaten away at the value of soldiers' salaries and slashed the military's budget for maintenance and equipment. Towards the middle of last year, the army said it had scrapped meat from the meals offered to on-duty soldiers, due to rising food prices.

Lebanon has been without a functioning government since a massive blast in Beirut in August last year killed more than 200 people and ravaged swathes of the Mediterranean port city. Politicians have failed to agree on a new cabinet line-up even as foreign currency cash reserves plummet, causing fuel, electricity and medicine shortages. Earlier this month, France hosted a donor conference at which 20 nations agreed to provide emergency aid to Lebanon's military. — AFP



## Thailand prepares for Phuket reopening despite COVID surge



An aerial photograph of the Big Buddha and Kata Beach behind it yesterday, a day before the "Phuket Sandbox" tourism scheme that allows visits by people vaccinated against the COVID-19 is set to launch. — AFP photos

Thailand prepared yesterday to reopen the holiday hotspot of Phuket to tourists quarantine-free, even as the country registered its highest single-day death toll from COVID-19. High hopes have been pinned on the so-called "Phuket sandbox"—a model that will allow vaccinated travellers to visit without a quarantine period in an effort to revive Thailand's battered tourism industry. But the lead-up to its July 1 launch has been plagued with uncertainty amid delays to government approval.

Thailand has been trying to contain a third wave of the coronavirus by imposing

restrictions in the capital Bangkok and its suburbs, which have seen the Alpha and Delta variants spreading. Yesterday saw the kingdom's highest single-day death toll yet of 53. However, authorities say the Phuket sandbox will go ahead as planned. About 250 passengers are scheduled to land on the island Thursday on four flights, according to COVID-19 taskforce spokesman Taweasin Visanuyothin. The return of tourists will bring welcome relief for businesses. Thailand usually welcomes about 40 million tourists every year and about 18 percent of the country's GDP comes from the

sector.

But for over a year Phuket's pristine sandy beaches have been unusually quiet and more than 80 percent of hotels have been shuttered. To prepare for the reopening, two-thirds of Phuket's population have been inoculated. In the notorious Patong Beach neighborhood—once humming with a thriving nightlife scene—vendors were busy preparing yesterday for a return to action. "Everyone and every profession associated with tourism has been affected," said Thewan Phromyang, 49, who leases sun beds to tourists. "I agree 100 percent with the

Phuket sandbox scheme... We don't have anything else to support us other than tourists." But there will be restrictions in place for those choosing Phuket for their holiday. Visitors will have to stay on the island for 14 days if they wish to travel elsewhere in Thailand, and they must take three COVID tests during that period. The number of COVID-19 cases in Phuket also cannot exceed 90 in one week. — AFP



An aerial photograph of the Big Buddha and Kata Beach behind it.



An aerial photograph shows a lone visitor on Karon Beach.

## Norway salmon farming moves to cleaner waters: Indoors

Hundreds of thousands of salmon swim against the current in south-east Norway in massive indoor tanks away from the nearest river as the controversial industry increasingly embraces greener land-based facilities. The fish live in two gigantic pools inside an inconspicuous industrial building in Fredrikstad owned by a company that plans to raise salmon in similar settings even further afield, in the United States. By raising the salmon on land, the industry is attempting to move away from the river or sea cages that have invited criticism over a slew of issues.

The problems run from costly mass escapes to fish infected with sea lice treated with chemicals to mounds of faeces and feed piling up on the seabed below the farms. "At sea, you depend on the almighty for many things. In a land-based farm, we are suddenly the all-powerful one," Fredrikstad Seafoods general manager Roger Fredriksen told AFP. "Here we control everything: tempera-

ture, oxygen, pH, CO<sub>2</sub>," he said as he gave a tour of Norway's first land-based salmon farm, opened in 2019. Pumped from the nearby mouth of Norway's largest river, the salt water that feeds the facility is treated with UV light to eliminate viruses and bacteria and afterwards it is cycled and filtered through a loop for repeated use. Under a faint blue light, designed to trigger their appetite, the salmon swim day and night as they are fed food pellets from an overhead dispenser.

When they reach between four and five kilograms (nine and 11 pounds), they are harvested. "The fish have a very firm consistency," said veterinarian Sandra Ledang, head of production at



A worker checks the quality of salmon at the Fredrikstad Seafoods land-based salmon farm in Fredrikstad, Norway. — AFP

the adjacent abattoir. "That's because it swims against the current all its life, from the moment it arrives in our facilities until it is slaughtered. It exercises absolutely every day," she added. As populations are expected to increase, with almost 10 billion mouths to feed by 2050, food production needs to be optimized. While salmon, which is rich in protein, is still a luxury in many places, it is finding new customers among the growing middle class, particularly in Asia.

## Made in China salmon

Matthias Halwart, a senior officer in the fisheries department of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), sees clear benefits to recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS), like those tested in Norway. "You have fully controlled environment for the fish, a very low water use, a very good disease control, a very efficient land use, you can optimize your feeding strategies and you can have a very good proximity with the market," Halwart tells AFP.

Proponents say that although land farms require a lot of energy, their proximity to consumers reduces the use of transportation, making them better for the environment. Land-based farming projects are already spreading around the world and soon salmon now primarily raised in Norwegian, Chilean, Scottish and Canadian waters will also be produced in Japan, Florida or China.

Nordic Aquafarms, the parent company of Fredrikstad Seafoods, is working on two farms in the United States, one in Maine on the east coast, the other in California on the west coast. The plan is to use Icelandic salmon roe to raise the fish there. "The idea is to produce locally. No need to fly salmon over the ocean from one continent to another," Fredriksen said.

## Happy fish?

However, production costs are still higher, and land-based salmon farming is currently considered more as a complement than a substitute for sea- or river-based farming. NGO Compassion in World Farming, which campaigns against intensive factory farming, fears that the quest for profits will come at the expense of animal welfare. "We estimate that the minimum density necessary for profitability is 50 kilograms per cubic meter of water," said Lucille Bellegarde, in charge of agri-food affairs for the French branch of the organization.

But she lamented that the "average density found in existing systems is more like 80 kilograms per cubic meter"—eight times denser than what the NGO recommends. Fredriksen said these fears are misguided as his farm cares about the welfare of the salmon. "If the fish are not happy, they don't grow." — AFP

## Captive-bred gorillas give birth in the wild

A baby gorilla has been born in the wild in Gabon from two parents who grew up in captivity in Europe, in a world-first that was hailed by conservationists of the endangered species on Tuesday. The baby gorilla is thought to have been delivered on the night of June 13 in the Bateke Plateau National Park in the southeast of Gabon in central Africa. Its 13-year-old mother Mayombe was born in the ZooParc de Beauval in France, while 15-year-old father Djongo was raised in the Port Lympne Safari Park in southeast England.

The pair of western lowland gorillas were introduced to the Gabon park in 2019 and 2013 respectively and their mating represents a breakthrough in the complicated process of re-wilding. "It's extraordinary news, a very significant world-first for the conservation of this species which is in serious danger of becoming extinct," Delphine Delord, assistant director of Beauval zoo, told AFP. The Aspinall Foundation, which runs the Port Lympne Safari Park, reported the infant gorilla to be in good health.



This undated handout photograph released by The Aspinall Foundation, shows a baby gorilla cradled by its mother 'Mayombe' in The Bateke Plateau, south-east Gabon.

It released photos and a video of Mayombe cradling her newborn, adding that it was "delighted to announce the first ever birth to re-wilded, captive-born gorillas." "This is a pivotal moment for wildlife conservation and a hugely emotional day for our entire team," chairman Damian Aspinall said in a statement sent to AFP. Almost 80 percent of Gabon is covered by forests, and primate habitation and protection programs have been set up in its parks in recent years to boost tourism. The number of western lowland gorillas has declined by 60 percent in the past 20-25 years, according to the Aspinall Foundation, with poaching and habitat loss chiefly to blame.

## 'Cruel nature'

Delord from Beauval zoo warned that the weeks and months ahead would be critical for the baby. "Nature is cruel, anything can happen," she said. "The baby is fragile but for the moment Mayombe is holding her newborn in the perfect position and is feeding well. "Djongo is approaching them very gently. We even saw him touch the baby on the camera traps that turn on when an animal passes. "Male gorillas have a role to play in the development of their offspring. We're looking at the creation of a new troop here which will be boosted by the reintroduction of another female who was born in England," she added.

The Aspinall Foundation says it has released eight black rhino, 135 primates, 11 European bison, and over 70 western lowland gorillas back to the wild. Djongo was introduced to the Bateke Plateau National Park in 2013 along with his father, Djala, a wild-born orphan who was brought to Britain in 1986 after he was found tied to a post by a uranium prospector. Gabon, which borders the Republic of Congo and Cameroon, stopped allowing tourists to see its great apes last year fearing that humans could give the novel coronavirus to the animals. — AFP



## Lifestyle | Features



Handout pictures released by Reeman Dansie auctions shows a silver Ford Escort that once belonged to Diana, Princess of Wales. — AFP photos

## Diana's royal runaround sold to South American museum

A Ford Escort that once belonged to Diana, princess of Wales, was sold on Tuesday to a South American museum for more than £50,000 (\$69,200, 58,100 euros). The silver 1.6L Ghia saloon was given by Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer as an engagement present in May 1981, two months before their fairytale wedding at St Paul's Cathedral. The vehicle, which was bought at auction for £6,000 by an antiques dealer in 1982, was sold to a telephone bidder for £52,640, including sales tax and buyer's premium.

Lewis Rabett, of Reeman Dansie Auctions in Colchester, southeast England, said the successful bidder was a museum in South America, where the car will now be shipped. "The interest has been considerable pre-auction.

Ending up in South America is testament to the level of interest globally that there has been in the car," he added. The car still has its original British registration plate WEV 297W, paint and upholstery and has 83,000 miles (133,575 kilometers) on the clock. It had been expected to sell for between £30,000 and £40,000.



Diana died aged 36 in a high-speed car crash in Paris in August 1997 as she tried to escape paparazzi photographers on motorbikes. Her sons, princes William and Harry, will today unveil a new statue at her former Kensington Palace home in London on what would have been her 60th birthday. — AFP



In this file photo a gallery worker poses with a painting titled 'David Hockney' by British painter Lucian Freud during a photocall at Sotheby's auction house in central London. — AFP

## Freud portrait of Hockney sells for £14.9 million

A portrait of British painter and print-maker David Hockney by his friend and contemporary Lucian Freud sold Tuesday at auction in London for nearly £15 million. The high price for portrait — £14,905,200 (\$20,700,000, 17,400,00 euros) — was driven by competing bids by five collectors as the work made its debut at auction. It last appeared in public during a 2012 exhibition of Freud's work at the National Portrait Gallery in London, the international auctioneer Sotheby's said in a statement. The stark painting of Hockney, rendered in Freud's distinctive and expressive style, was the product of more than 100 hours of sittings between the pair in 2002.

## 'It's a rush of culture!' Americans return to Paris

They're back! After vanishing from Paris for a year and a half, American tourists have returned, COVID vaccination certificates in pocket, as part of a grand reopening of the country's tourist sector. France, which was the world's top tourism destination before the coronavirus pandemic, began welcoming back Americans on June 9. "It's amazing! We've been wanting to come back since last year," said Padmini Pyapali, an engineer on a tour of Greece and France with five friends, who were having a drink on a cafe terrace in the Montmartre district. "It's just a rush of culture and we really missed it," she said.

The United States was France's biggest source of non-European tourists

before the virus struck, with over four million visiting the country each year. Americans are also among the biggest spenders, making them a welcome sight for retailers and tour operators in Paris, where English is again echoing around the feet of the Eiffel Tower and the Sacre-Coeur basilica. The US has the top "green" rating on France's COVID map of the world, meaning visitors need to show only that they have been fully vaccinated or present a clean PCR test.

Crystal McDaniel from Dallas, with her husband Brandon, made a beeline on arrival for the Eiffel Tower with their two daughters, who came away clutching miniature models of the Iron Lady. Crystal expressed joy at being able to roam Europe again. "It was expensive to get the test, but it's worth it, just to be out (of the US)," she said. Bad weather for much of June failed to dampen the mood of the returnees, who for the moment represent a trickle, not a flood. —AFP

# 112-YEAR-OLD PUERTO RICAN BECOMES WORLD'S OLDEST LIVING MAN

Emilio Flores Marquez from Puerto Rico has become the world's oldest living man at an age of 112 years and 326 days old, Guinness World Records announced yesterday. Marquez, who was born in Carolina, east of the Puerto Rican capital of San Juan in 1908, was recognized by Guinness and awarded a certificate at his home just a few miles (kilometers) from his birthplace. Asked about his longevity, Marquez-known as "Don Milo" to his friends-said the secret to his advanced years lay in compassion.

"My dad raised me with love and taught me to love everyone. He always told me and my brothers and sisters to do good, to share everything with others. Besides, Christ lives in me," Guinness quoted him as saying. The second oldest child of 11 siblings and his parents' first-born son, Marquez worked on the family's sugarcane farm and received only three years of formal

schooling. He wife of 75 years Andrea Perez De Flores, with whom he had four children, died in 2010.

The previous oldest living man was recognized by Guinness World Records as Romania's Dumitru Comanescu, who died on June 27, 2020, at the age of 111 years 219 days. After Comanescu's death, the record-breaking authority received evidence Marquez had been born three months earlier than the previous record holder. "It's always an honor to celebrate these remarkable human beings, and this year we've processed applications from not one but two contenders for the title of oldest living man," Craig Glenday, Editor-in-Chief at Guinness World Records, said. — AFP



Emilio Flores Marquez from Puerto Rico is the world's oldest living man at an age of 112. —Guinness world records

## Delia Fiallo, 'mother of the telenovela,' dies in Miami

Cuban screenwriter Delia Fiallo, widely seen as "the mother of the telenovela" and the writer behind international hits like the soap opera "Crystal", died Tuesday in Miami at the age of 96, her daughter-in-law confirmed to AFP. A pioneer of the wildly popular romantic soap operas in Latin America, Fiallo, whose career began in the middle of the last century, told AFP in an interview in 2018 that she wanted to be remembered "as a person who loved a lot and who was very loved." Her daughter-in-law, Odalis Baez, confirmed her death.



Adored by her fans, Fiallo left her mark on US Hispanic popular culture in the second half of the 20th century. She started her career in Cuba in 1950 with radio soap operas before writing her first television screenplay in 1957. She then worked with Venezuelan television stations after leaving Communist Cuba for Miami in 1966, scripting popular shows like "Lucecita" in 1967, or global hits like "Esmeralda", "Leonela", "Cristal" and "Kassandra". —AFP

## La Scala seeks new audiences with outdoor concerts

Milan's La Scala theatre is venturing outside its hallowed walls to offer free, open-air concerts at venues around the northern Italian city in mid-July, director Dominique Meyer announced Tuesday. "It's a sign of

recovery, going to meet the public," he told reporters at a press conference, adding that "opera, music and ballet is for everyone". From July 11 to 13, the orchestra, choir and ballet of La Scala will put on 14 concerts around Milan with a repertoire running from jazz to Vivaldi and Donizetti, via Brahms, Bach and Rachmaninov.

All will in some way pay tribute to Argentine composer and bandoneon player Astor Piazzolla, who revolutionized tango by incorporating elements of classical and jazz music in the 1970s and 80s, to mark the 100th anniversary of his birth. On July 14, the concerts will conclude with an open day at the theatre comprising a program including Verdi, Rossini and Puccini. Meyer told AFP the

initiative was about "going to meet spectators rather than waiting for them to come to the theatre-people who don't normally go to La Scala either because they were worried about the cost of tickets, or intimidated by the venue". "It's always the first step that counts, so it's La Scala that is taking the first step," he added, saying that opening its doors was "an exercise in cultural democracy". In the same vein, the theatre has decided to lower the prices of certain subscriptions for the next season. After six months of silence due to coronavirus restrictions, La Scala reopened its doors to the public on May 10. — AFP

## Amazon dispatches Alexa to tell stories to kids

Amazon on Tuesday said that its Alexa digital assistant can now be a reading buddy for children, coaching them when they get stuck on words. A "Reading Sidekick" feature gives people with Echo smart speakers and subscriptions to Amazon Kids+ service a way to help children ages between 5 and 10 years of age become better readers, according to the Seattle-based internet firm. Alexa will read stories aloud to children while also encouraging them to participate. "With the arrival of Reading Sidekick, we are hopeful we can make reading fun for millions of kids to set them up for a lifetime of learning and a love of reading," said Marissa Mierow, head of Alexa Education and Learning.

"Alexa provides a welcoming, no-judgment zone and is always ready to help





## Sports

# Djokovic into Wimbledon last 32 despite more falls

**LONDON:** Defending champion Novak Djokovic survived a series of falls on Centre Court to reach the Wimbledon third round yesterday with a straight sets win over Kevin Anderson. World number one Djokovic, chasing a sixth Wimbledon and record-equaling 20th Grand Slam title, won 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 over the 102nd-ranked South African. However, he slipped and fell on at least five occasions on Centre Court, the day after Serena Williams suffered a tearful, tournament-ending injury on Tuesday due to similar slips.

Each time, 34-year-old Djokovic dusted himself down to set up a clash against either Italian veteran Andreas Seppi or American qualifier Denis Kudla. Despite the tumbles, the Serb cruised to victory over the man he defeated in the 2018 final without facing a single break point and committing just six unforced errors. "I have a nice connection with the crowd," said Djokovic. "I also seem to be having a really nice connection with the grass. I don't recall falling so much in the first two matches at Wimbledon previously."

## Serena hobbles out

American legend Serena Williams' dreams of winning an eighth Wimbledon singles title and equaling

Margaret Court's Grand Slam record of 24 ended in tears on Tuesday. The 39-year-old was leading 3-1 in the first set of her first round match against Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus when she slipped and had to have off court medical attention.

She returned but called it quits at 3-3 and walked off Centre Court in tears. "I was heartbroken to have to withdraw today after injuring my right leg," she said in a statement posted late evening on her Instagram account.

It is the first time in 20 appearances that Williams has bowed out in the first round of Wimbledon. "Brutal for @serenawilliams but center court is extremely slippery out there. Not easy to move out there," tweeted British star Andy Murray. Williams, who also had strapping on her right thigh, hasn't won a Slam since the 2017 Australian Open. Earlier, Swiss legend Roger Federer and Australia's world number one Ashleigh Barty both progressed but only after overcoming scares.

They at least were able to play to their schedule due to the roof on Centre Court but those on the outside courts had to kick their heels for several hours because of rain. As a result 27 singles matches had to be deferred to Wednesday and men's doubles matches

will be the best of three sets in the first and second rounds as organizers try to get the schedule back on track.

## Federer survives scare

Federer arrived on the back of a disappointing second round exit at Halle, a tournament he all but owns having won it 10 times but said he was pumped up for Wimbledon. The 39-year-old eight-time champion looked to be more deflated than pumped up when he trailed Frenchman Adrian Mannarino by two sets to one.

However, already a break up in the fourth and looking more like the Federer of old the match turned when Mannarino tumbled towards the end of the fourth set. His fall was at the same end of Centre Court which was also to claim Williams.

His 33rd birthday turned into a nightmare as he had to retire at 6-4, 6-7 (3/7), 3-6, 6-2. "He was the better player, he could have won, I got a bit lucky," said Federer. "That's how it goes sometimes, you don't get many walkovers and try not to have it happen to yourself."

Barty came through 6-1, 6-7 (1/7), 6-1 against Carla Suarez Navarro in a match filled with emotion on Centre Court. Barty's Spanish opponent made sure her 11th and final appearance at The



**LONDON:** Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates his victory over South Africa's Kevin Anderson during their men's singles second round match on the third day of the 2021 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London yesterday. — AFP

Championships went the distance just months after returning from a winning fight against cancer.

Barty joined in the standing ovation for Suarez Navarro as the 32-year-old left the court with the Spaniard's mother Maria wiping away a tear. "She is a fighter, an incredible competitor and lovely person and I cannot find one bad

word to say about her," said Barty of her opponent.

Russian second seed Daniil Medvedev went through with a 6-4, 6-1, 4-6, 7-6 (7/3) win over Jan-Lennard Struff of Germany. "I was a bit surprised by the first two sets that I managed to win so easy, that's why Grand Slams are funny," said Medvedev. — AFP

## Wimbledon courts under fire after Serena exit

**LONDON:** Serious questions were being asked of Wimbledon's fabled grass courts yesterday following Serena Williams' tearful, tournament-ending injury with Australian firebrand Nick Kyrgios branding them "a joke".

Williams, the seven-time Wimbledon champion, slipped and hurt her heavily-strapped right leg before quitting her first round tie after just six games against Aliaksandra Sasnovich. The American superstar twice fell to the floor of Centre Court, struggling to get back to her feet on the second occasion.

In tears, she waved to all sides of the court prompting speculation that she had played her last Wimbledon singles match. "I was heartbroken to have to withdraw," said the 39-year-old who remains one Slam short of Margaret Court's record of 24.

Her heart-stopping fall came not long after French player Adrian Mannarino had slipped and hurt him-

self on the same part of Centre Court. He too had to retire with his match against Roger Federer level at two sets apiece. "I do feel it feels a tad more slippery maybe under the roof," said Federer. "You do have to move very, very carefully out there. If you push too hard in the wrong moments, you do go down. I do feel it's drier during the day. With the wind and all that stuff, it takes the moisture out of the grass."

## 'More slippery, soft'

However, Federer, who has won eight Wimbledon titles and played 115 matches at the tournament, insists the courts are no different from other years. "I don't think it plays very different. It's always been like this. I feel for a lot of players, it's super key to get through those first two rounds because the grass is more slippery, it is more soft. As the tournament progresses, usually it gets harder and eas-



**LONDON:** US player Serena Williams reacts as she withdraws from her women's singles first round match against Belarus's Aliaksandra Sasnovich on the second day of the 2021 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on Tuesday. —AFP

ier to move on."

Australia's Nick Kyrgios, playing under the roof on Court One, was also dismissive of the conditions. "Guys, for you watching at home, it should be fast here, that's grass court tennis," Kyrgios was overheard saying before his match with Ugo Humbert was suspended for the night at 3-3 in the final

set. "It's a joke. Try watering it. Make it a grass court again."

Despite the criticism, the All England Club insisted that the courts are up to standard. "The preparation of the grass courts has been to exactly the same meticulous standard as in previous years," the club said in a statement. — AFP



**FOUGERES:** Stage winner Team Deceuninck Quickstep's Mark Cavendish of Great Britain celebrates after crossing the finish line of the 4th stage of the 108th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 150 km between Redon and Fougeres, on Tuesday. —AFP

## Cavendish on fire after first Tour de France stage win in five years

**FOUGERES:** Mark Cavendish broke down and wept after sprinting to his first Tour de France stage victory in five years on Tuesday, taking his tally of wins to 31 on the world's greatest bike race. Cavendish only made the Deceuninck Tour de France roster after Irish sprinter Sam Bennett pulled out at the last minute and was generous in his praise of the team's crucial role in his return to the top.

The signs looked good early on in the fourth stage when Cavendish won the intermediate sprint, his maximum 70-point gain on the day handing him the green jersey awarded to the sprint points leader. In the sprint on this relatively short stage Cavendish showed all his savvy, bidding his time to edge ahead with 50 metres to go and eventually finishing ahead of French sprinter Nacer Bouhanni.

Known as the "Manx Missile", the rider from the Isle of Man shook his head in disbelief as he pulled on the green jersey. "It's been five years too

long," said Cavendish, inching closer to Belgian cycling legend Eddie Merckx's record of 34 individual stage wins between 1969-75.

"There has been a lot of talk about my condition and I hope this gives hope to people in my condition," said the 36-year-old who was diagnosed in 2017 with the Epstein-Barr virus, which can cause persistent fatigue. Conversely there was heartbreak for Belgian rookie Brent Van Moer as the 23-year-old Lotto rider was caught just 150 meters from the finish line after leading an escape for the majority of the attack.

## 'I had fire in my eyes'

Cavendish hailed world champion Julian Alaphilippe, from whom he inherits the green jersey, after the Frenchman gave everything to get Cavendish into position. "I didn't think we were going to catch him," Cavendish admitted. "The GC (overall standings) guys were ahead blocking

the road and we couldn't get them going. But I had fire in my eyes," said an emotional Cavendish.

"It's not easy winning a Tour de France stage, the hardest thing has been people not understanding how hard it was to win those stages," he

said of the years when his career seemed to have stalled. "It's not about proving anyone wrong. I knew I could do it, I just need someone to believe in me and that was Patrick Lefevere, and my wife at home, those are the people I wanted to believe." — AFP

## Barty, Kyrgios lead Australia's Olympic tennis team

**SYDNEY:** World number one Ashleigh Barty confirmed she will compete at the Tokyo Olympics Tuesday, headlining an 11-strong Australian tennis team for the Games that includes firebrand Nick Kyrgios. Barty's announcement comes just a day after four-time gold medalist Serena Williams revealed she would be skipping the Games, which will also be without Spanish great Rafael Nadal.

The 2019 French Open champion Barty, 25, said she intended to compete in both singles and doubles at the Games. "I'm proud," she said after winning her first round match at Wimbledon on Tuesday. "I'm bloody proud to be able to be a part of an Australian Olympic team. It was always a dream of mine. To be able to be officially named is awesome."

Barty is the first indigenous Australian to be selected for tennis — the sport was not on the

Olympic program during the heyday of her great mentor and role model Evonne Goolagong Cawley. "Yeah, it is (a source of pride to be the first indigenous Australian to be on the tennis team)," she said.

"I know that we've got a really good group, big group, of Australian indigenous athletes in our (overall) team. I know for me it's a first for tennis, but there have certainly been a lot of Olympic athletes that have paved the way for me in an indigenous sense, kind of showing me there is a pathway, that it is possible."

The Australia team comprises six men and five women, including former US Open champion Sam Stosur who will be going to her fifth Olympic Games at the age of 37. World number 15 Alex de Minaur is the top-ranked Australian man, with the volatile Kyrgios likely to be one of the highest profile male players in the draw, despite his modest ranking of 60.

Both will play singles with De Minaur also featuring in the doubles. In contrast to veteran Stosur, Barty, De Minaur and Kyrgios will all be making their Olympic debuts in Tokyo. "It's super special being able to represent your country in one Olympics let alone five," said Stosur, who also competed at Athens 2004, Beijing 2008, London 2012 and Rio 2016. — AFP



Ashleigh Barty

## Serena's record hopes slipping and sliding away

**LONDON:** Serena Williams's innocuous slip that ended her Wimbledon campaign at the first hurdle symbolized the manner in which her powers have been steadily sliding away. The question is whether the "heartbroken" 39-year-old American legend wants her fans' last memory of her on a stage where she has won seven singles titles to be that of her eyes-filled with tears as she limped off.

"I feel sad for Serena," said 2013 Wimbledon champion Marion Bartoli on the BBC after Williams was forced to quit her match with Aliaksandra Sasnovich after just six games. "I sincerely hope it is not the last time we see her at Wimbledon. The way she waved at the crowd, and put her hand on the heart to show her appreciation, I hope it is not a farewell."

The problem for Williams is the target of equaling Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam singles titles looks more remote than ever. Back in 2017, when she won the Australian Open to move to within one of the controversial Court's tally, she looked odds on to achieve that and more.

Even after taking time out that year to have her baby daughter Olympia she was expected to return as dominant as before with few likely rivals on the horizon. However, since then it has been a tale of regression by degrees from reaching four finals — two at Wimbledon (2018/19) and two at the US Open (2018/19) — and falling short every time.

Last year, albeit one in which Wimbledon did not take place due to the coronavirus pandemic, her fortunes dipped even lower as for the first time since 2006 she failed to reach a Grand Slam final. Despite the hits Williams remained outwardly confident at least that she was still capable of equaling Court's mark even after withdrawing from her second round match at the 2020 French Open. "I'm pretty good at it still and I'm so close to some things, so I feel like I'm almost there," she said. "I think that's what keeps me going."

## 'Still the greatest'

However, as injuries mount up on her those who have been down that route themselves say the player may not wish to accept that time has run out. "The last thing a champion like Serena wants to do is to go out in a walkover," three-time Wimbledon champion Boris Becker told the BBC.

"But you have got to get used to the fact she is past 30 — I won't put a number on her age! — and now this means another year of coming back from injuries. It is sad to see but unfortunately time waits on no man or woman."

One thing that could keep Williams plugging away is the fluidity of the women's game and the lack of a dominant successor to her — she is still ranked in the top 10. Bartoli remains convinced the elusive Grand Slam title will come her way. "I still feel she can win that 24th major, she has it inside her," said Bartoli. "The amount of injury and bad luck of sliding is such a shame."

Williams said in her pre Wimbledon press conference she has always had an "X on her back" since she won her first US Open in 1999. Her fans both inside and outside the game will pray she does not prolong her career in the style of other sports stars who fear they will miss the fix of the adulation of the crowd when they return to the banality of domestic life. — AFP



# Giannis injured as Hawks down Bucks to level series

**NEW YORK:** Giannis Antetokounmpo suffered a knee injury as the Milwaukee Bucks slumped to a series-leveling defeat against the Atlanta Hawks in their NBA Eastern Conference finals clash on Tuesday. An all-round offensive effort from the Hawks secured a 110-88 victory at the State Farm Arena to square the best-of-seven series at 2-2. Lou Williams, starting in place of the injured Trae Young, led the scoring with 21 points for Atlanta while Bogdan Bogdanovic had 20 points. Six Atlanta players finished in double digits. "We had great and great ball movement — all the things we needed, we got that," said Hawks coach Nate McMillan. "It started with our guys. It was a total team effort and guys continue to step in and take advantage of opportunities when they get them."

Jrue Holiday led the Bucks scorers with 19 points while Khris Middleton finished with 16 points. But the main talking point from a comprehensive Atlanta victory was the injury to Antetokounmpo in the third quarter. The two-time NBA Most Valuable Player collapsed to the court in agony after landing awkwardly following a tussle near the basket with Clint Capela.

Replays showed Antetokounmpo's left knee buckle and a hushed silence descended as the 26-year-old Greek star received treatment on the court. He was later led off the court and back to the locker room. He returned unassisted shortly afterwards before eventually being ruled out of the game with what the Bucks said was a hyper-extended left knee.

The incident appeared to rattle the Bucks, who trailed by 10 points 62-52 when the injury occurred. With Antetokounmpo off the court, the Hawks sought to ram home their advantage and surged into a 25-point lead at 87-62 by the end of the third quarter.

The Hawks kept the throttle down in the fourth quarter, maintaining a comfortable lead to close out a convincing win. A somber Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer had no further information about Antetokounmpo, describing the injured star as "part of our soul, our fiber." "He's in the locker room with the guys and just addressed the group," Budenholzer said. "But nothing above and beyond that. We'll see how he



**ATLANTA:** Giannis Antetokounmpo #34 of the Milwaukee Bucks is injured against Clint Capela #15 of the Atlanta Hawks during the second half in Game Four of the Eastern Conference Finals at State Farm Arena on Tuesday in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

is tomorrow." Budenholzer however backed his team to respond in game five on Thursday when the series heads back to Milwaukee while paying tribute to the Hawks all-round performance.

"They had a lot of guys play well tonight for really the whole game so credit to Atlanta," he said. "We've got to be better at both ends. We'll get better. The character of our group will come through. We're going back to Milwaukee and it's 2-2."

Budenholzer also backed the Bucks to be competitive with or without Giannis. "We've got a heck of a team, a heck of a roster," he said. "The guys will be

ready to compete and play — that's what it's about."

Atlanta had dominated from the outset, surging into an early 25-22 lead in the first quarter and then outscoring Milwaukee by 10 points in the second to lead 51-38 at the half. A miserable night for Antetokounmpo saw him once again struggle from the free throw line to the delight of a merciless Atlanta crowd. Hawks fans repeatedly counted down loudly in order to throw Antetokounmpo off his rhythm, and jeers rang out as the Bucks star aimed multiple airshots at the basket from the free throw line in the first half. — AFP

## IOC chief arriving in Tokyo July 8 before Games

**TOKYO:** Olympics chief Thomas Bach will arrive in Japan on July 8. Tokyo 2020 organizers said yesterday as they make final preparations for the pandemic-postponed Games. Bach had initially been expected to visit Tokyo in May, but that trip was cancelled over virus restrictions. Tokyo 2020 said Bach would isolate for three days on arrival, adding that the International Olympic Committee head has been vaccinated. He hopes to visit Hiroshima on July 16 to coincide with the start of an Olympic truce, organizers added.

The truce — adopted by the United Nations — aims to ensure a halt to all hostilities, allowing the safe passage and participation of athletes and spectators for the Games. The IOC will hold a board meeting in Tokyo from July 17 and a general meeting from July 20, with a vote expected on Brisbane as 2032 Olympic host. Just a few weeks remain until the Tokyo 2020 opening ceremony on July 23, with several Olympic teams already in the country. The Games will take place under strict rules, with overseas fans banned and local spectators limited. Polls have found most Japanese would rather see the Games postponed again or cancelled than held this year, though opposition has softened in recent weeks. Japan has experienced a relatively small coronavirus outbreak and has now exceeded a million doses a day in its vaccination program. — AFP



**SUSONO:** Japanese torchbearers Keisuke Inatomi (left) and Yukari Okamura (right) hand over the flame of the Olympic torch during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Torch Relay in Susono, Shizuoka prefecture on June 25, 2021. — AFP

## No public for Olympic torch relay in parts of host Tokyo

**TOKYO:** Parts of the Olympic torch relay in host city Tokyo will be taken off public roads, officials said yesterday, in another virus setback for the flame as it travels across Japan. The Olympic torch relay due to begin on July 9 in Tokyo will mostly be displayed at closed ceremonies for the first eight days of its time in the capital, in line with virus countermeasures, Tokyo government official Koichi Osakabe told AFP.

"Instead, we will have a ceremony each day at the final spot of the day's (planned) relay runs," he said, adding that roughly 100 runners per day would be affected by the change. The change mostly affects portions of the relay outside Tokyo's 23 central neighborhoods. Osakabe said a decision on how to hold sections in more densely populated parts of the relay would be made later. The flame will make its entrance at the National Stadium in Tokyo on July 23 — the opening of the Olympics — after traversing Japan's 47 prefectures.

But it has regularly been forced off public roads because of virus concerns, with torchbearers having to settle for passing the flame from one to another in closed ceremonies at single sites. With just weeks until the Games open, the pandemic continues to cast a long shadow. Tokyo and several other prefectures have cancelled public viewing events for the Games, and Japan's top infectious disease experts have pushed for the event to happen behind closed doors.

Two members of Uganda's Olympic delegation tested positive for the virus, prompting a rethink of rules for teams arriving early, according to local media. An entire team may now be required to quarantine if a single member tests positive, and delegations could be instructed to eat in silence, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported yesterday.

Japan has had a comparatively small virus outbreak, with just over 14,700 deaths despite avoiding harsh lockdowns. The government has recently accelerated vaccination efforts, with just over 10 percent of the population fully jabbed.

After the government lifted the virus state of emergency last month, Tokyo and six other areas remain under "quasi-emergency" measures until July 11. But with cases in Tokyo starting to rise again, media reports suggest those measures are likely to be extended further, possibly into Games time. — AFP

## Mariners pitcher suspended under 'stickygate' crackdown

**LOS ANGELES:** Seattle Mariners pitcher Hector Santiago has been given a 10-game suspension and an undisclosed fine as part of Major League Baseball's crackdown on illegal substances, the league said Tuesday. Santiago was ejected from Sunday's road game against the Chicago White Sox after umpires discovered a "foreign substance" on his glove.

The league said in a statement that Santiago had appealed against the suspension, meaning he is free to play until the process has been completed. Santiago denied wrongdoing, claiming the only substances on the glove were sweat and rosin, a powder that pitchers are allowed to use under MLB rules in order to get a better grip. Santiago's ejection marked the first time a player has been thrown out of a game since MLB unveiled new rules designed to deter pitchers from altering the condition of baseballs by applying foreign substances. The use of sticky substances by pitchers — dubbed 'stickygate' — has come under the microscope since the start of the season as batting averages have plummeted and strike-out rates have soared.

MLB commissioner Rob Manfred said the new rules were necessary to level the playing field after an investigation found widespread use of foreign substances to alter the condition of the ball. The crackdown has been criticized by players across the league, while some pitchers have reacted angrily during checks of their gloves by game officials.

### Bauer probed

Elsewhere, Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Trevor

Bauer faces a criminal investigation after a woman claimed she was physically assaulted by the Cy Young Award winner, police in California confirmed on Tuesday. The Pasadena Police Department said officers were investigating allegations made against Bauer by the woman, who on Tuesday obtained a restraining order against the Dodgers star. Marc Garelick, representing the woman, said in a statement his client had suffered severe physical and emotional pain" from the "recent assault." "Our goal is to keep Mr Bauer from contacting our client in any way possible," Garelick said. "We anticipate there will be criminal action against Mr Bauer, and it is our hope law enforcement will take our client's allegations and case seriously."

Bauer denied wrongdoing in a statement issued via his agent, Jon Fetterolf, late on Tuesday. Fetterolf said the pitcher's sexual relationship with the woman was consensual. "Her basis for filing a protection order is non-existent, fraudulent, and deliberately omits key facts, information, and her own relevant communications," Fetterolf said. "Any allegations that the pair's encounters were not 100 percent consensual are baseless, defamatory, and will be refuted to the fullest extent of the law."

The Dodgers, the reigning World Series champions, meanwhile issued a statement saying they were aware of the allegations and had contacted Major League Baseball. "The Dodgers take any allegations of this nature very seriously but will have no further comment at this time." The Dodgers signed Bauer this year on a three-year deal worth \$102 million following the pitcher's departure from the Cincinnati Reds. — AFP



**CHICAGO:** In this file photo taken on June 25, 2021, Umpires Phil Cuzzi #10 and Brian Gorman #9 talk to Hector Santiago #57 of the Seattle Mariners before ejecting him from the game after finding a substance on his glove in the fifth inning against the Chicago White Sox at Guaranteed Rate Field in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP



**BANGKOK:** South Korea's Ulsan Hyundai player Hong Chul (right) battles for the ball against Thailand's BG Pathum United player Piyachanon Darit during their AFC Champions League match at Pathum Thani Stadium in Bangkok. — AFP

## Ulsan stay unbeaten on high-scoring day at ACL

**DOHA:** Ulsan Hyundai Motors beat BG Pathum United 2-0 to stay unbeaten in the Asian Champions League while all the other three matches in the competition on Tuesday produced lop-sided results that left losing sides grappling with a few home truths.

Last year's MVP Yoon Bit-garam missed the match for Ulsan due to injury but the South Korean giants still had enough firepower to quell their Thai rivals' challenge at the LEO Stadium in Thanyaburi. Kim Min-jun and Lukas Hinterseer scored in the first half to give holders Ulsan their second straight win in the tournament in Group F.

Pathum United played aggressively and got their first crack at the Ulsan goal in the 17th minute after Koh Myong-jin fouled Diogo outside the penalty

area. But the Brazilian forward, who took the free-kick, sent his shot sailing over the bar. Ulsan took charge after that and started making inroads past the Pathum United defense, breaking the deadlock in the 24th minute.

Kim grabbed a pass from Valeri Qazaishvili before advancing and unleashing a powerful drive from well outside the penalty area, with the ball bouncing into the goal after taking a deflection off defender Andres Tumez's foot. The Thais had a couple of pot-shots at the Ulsan goal but it was the Koreans who consolidated with the match two minutes into first-half stoppage time.

Lee Chung-yong fired from well outside the area and Austrian forward Hinterseer produced a delectable back-heel to re-direct the ball into the net. Pathum Thani made several changes in a desperate bid to salvage the situation but to no avail even as rain lashed the ground leading to the suspension of play in the 79th minute.

Play resumed 30 minutes later but Ulsan held on to top the table with six points after Vietnam's Viettel FC thrashed the Philippines' Kaya FC 5-0 in a late match. Viettel were the only Southeast Asian side to acquit

themselves well on Tuesday, although it must be said that their rivals were also novices at this level.

Brazilian Caique scored a brace while Nguyen Hoang Duc, Bui Tien Dung and Vu Minh Tuan also helped themselves on to the scoresheet as Viettel grabbed their first win in the competition. United City, another Filipino side making their debut, also suffered heavily with South Korea's Daegu putting them to the sword for a 7-0 victory.

The Group I match saw An Yong-woo score a brace in the second half after Brazilians Cessina and Edgar Silva had given them a 2-0 lead early in the match. Kim Jin-hyuk, Park Han-bin and Jeong Chi-in accounted for the other goals in Tashkent to give Daegu their first win in two matches.

Kawasaki Frontale also made hay in Group I, thrashing a depleted Beijing Guoan 7-0 in Tashkent for their second win in as many matches. The 2020 J1-League champions opened their account through Tatsuya Hasegawa in the seventh minute and Kento Tachibanada made it 2-0 just a minute later. Kei Chinen helped himself to a second-half brace while Daiya Tono, Kazuya Yamamura and Yasuto Wakizaka completed the tally. — AFP



## Sports



# Southgate's 'masterpiece' silences skeptics as caution reaps rewards

**LONDON:** England are dreaming of Euro 2020 glory after finally slaying old nemesis Germany in the knockout stages of a major tournament and now have a favorable draw against Ukraine in the quarter-finals. A 2-0 win over the four-time world champions at a raucous Wembley — thanks to late goals from Raheem Sterling and Harry Kane — rewarded England manager Gareth Southgate's measured approach, which had been criticized for being overly cautious in the group phase.

Southgate knows only too well what the consequences of failure are for England against Germany in a major tournament on home soil. His distinguished playing career was forever dogged by a miss in the penalty shootout at Euro 96 that sent the Germans to the final.

Twenty-five years on, England are still waiting for their first major tournament win since 1966, when they beat Germany in the World Cup final, but are at least now consistent contenders. The Three Lions reached the semi-finals of the 2018 World Cup in Russia and the inaugural Nations League. And only a major shock in Rome on Saturday will deny them a

last-four spot once more.

Southgate's style on the sidelines in Russia caused a spike in demand for waistcoats back home but on the field he has shown himself to be a pragmatist, willing to put his neck on the line with unpopular decisions. "You know that if you change the shape, you pick certain personnel instead of others and, if it goes wrong, you're dead," he said after switching to a 3-4-3 formation to match up with Germany's wing-backs. That meant Jack Grealish, Phil Foden, Jadon Sancho, Marcus Rashford and Mason Mount all started the game sitting on the bench.

## Solid foundations

Blessed with England's best array of attacking talent in decades, Southgate has instead focused on building solid foundations. The results are clear to see after they started a tournament with four consecutive clean sheets for the first time since 1966.

"Not for the first time in the last three weeks, sticking to his beliefs and gut instincts has been rewarded," former Liverpool and England defender Jamie Carragher wrote in the Telegraph. "It has

been a long time since England had such a single-minded leader who is prepared to thrive or fail on his own terms."

Southgate's loaded bench also means England have the weapons to decide games as fatigue sets in. Grealish was the game-changer after his introduction 20 minutes from time with a part in both goals, but the manager's faith in Sterling and Kane was also rewarded.

After a poor end to the season with Manchester City, there were calls for Sterling to be dropped before the tournament began. However, with three of his country's four goals, the 26-year-old has finally delivered at a major tournament.

Kane already has a World Cup Golden Boot to his name but had barely looked like scoring in the opening three games of Euro 2020. The England skipper's time finally came four minutes from the end when he nodded home Grealish's cross to send the home crowd wild. "With 75 minutes on the clock, Wembley reverberated to a noise 25 years in the waiting," said the Times.

The newspaper said the fear was that Southgate's tactics "felt like painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel with a roller — it might get the job done but not as



**LONDON:** England's coach Gareth Southgate celebrates his team's victory at the end of the Euro 2020 round of 16 football match between England and Germany at Wembley Stadium in London on Tuesday. —AFP

attractively as desired. Yet then two swift, perfect brush strokes produced a masterpiece."

If England see off a limited Ukraine side hampered by injuries on Saturday they will be back at Wembley for the

semi-finals, with the permitted capacity extended to 60,000 as coronavirus restrictions are eased. A quarter of a century after it was supposed to, football may be finally coming home for Southgate and England. —AFP

## Loew walks away, Flick left to repair misfiring Germany

**LONDON:** Joachim Loew walks away after 15 years in charge of Germany leaving a misfiring side short of confidence and his successor Hansi Flick already under pressure to turn things around before next year's World Cup.

The Germans bowed out of Euro 2020 after a disappointing display in the 2-0 last 16 defeat to England on Tuesday at Wembley, which was Loew's 198th and final game in charge. His record of 124 wins, 40 draws and 34 defeats since 2006 is impressive.

Yet the figures mask the reality of tears in the German dressing room at Wembley following the latest painful defeat as, once again, Germany struggled to finish their chances. Loew had the high of winning the 2014 World Cup, including the remarkable 7-1 thrashing of hosts Brazil in the semi-finals, but his tenure was tarnished by the low of finishing bottom of the group four years later in Russia, which still haunts the Germans.

## Three things learned from England vs Germany

**LONDON:** England beat Germany on Tuesday for the first time in a knockout match since the 1966 World Cup final to reach the Euro 2020 quarter-finals. AFP Sport looks at three things we learned from the Wembley clash, which the home side won 2-0.

### Sterling the main man

Raheem Sterling was England's only goalscorer in the Euro 2020 group phase, putting captain Harry Kane in the shade. He was again the main threat for Gareth Southgate's side as they probed for an opening against Germany, looking to run at the defense at every opportunity. He eventually got the breakthrough as his play deserved, turning home Luke Shaw's cross to send the Wembley crowd wild.

Sterling struggled to hold down a first-team spot at Manchester City towards the end of the season but again proved his worth for England when it mattered, with his third goal of the tournament. Kane has been flat since the start of Euro 2020 following a fine season for Tottenham as goalscorer and provider and again looked out of sorts against Germany.

## Dovbyk heads Ukraine into quarter-final clash with England

**GLASGOW:** Artem Dovbyk's header in the 121st minute sent Ukraine through to a Euro 2020 quarter-final clash with England as they beat Sweden 2-1 after extra time in Glasgow on Tuesday. Ukraine squeezed through to the last 16 despite taking just three points in the group stage, qualifying in part because Sweden beat Poland to top Group E ahead of Spain. But Andriy Shevchenko's side were determined to show they deserved their place in the knockout phase as Oleksandr Zinchenko fired them into an early lead. Emil Forsberg's deflected strike brought Sweden level before half-time and the RB Leipzig midfielder twice hit the woodwork in the second half.

### 'Unforgettable moments'

"In these 15 years, there were a lot of things that were very positive," Loew insisted at Wembley. "We have developed steadily, the World Cup title in 2014, the Confederation Cup victory in 2017 with a young team."

"There have been moments that are unforgettable," added the 61-year-old. Yet Loew admitted his team had experienced "some problems since 2018" and that there had been "a lot of difficult periods" like the unforgettable 6-0 thrashing by Spain last November, which sparked his decision to step down.

His replacement, one-time assistant Hansi Flick, inherits a team which still needs to get its bid for qualification for the 2022 World Cup back on track after a shock home defeat to minnows North Macedonia in March.

When Thomas Mueller wasted a golden opportunity to equalize at Wembley with the goal at his mercy, it was typical of Germany's recent struggles in the final third.

A 4-2 thrashing of Portugal in the group stages only papered over the cracks running through a team which can dominate possession, yet struggle to use it.

Germany certainly has the talent. As Loew says, fledgling leaders like Joshua Kimmich and Leon

But he pounced four minutes from time to seal the win for England, stooping to head home Jack Grealish's cross. Kane has now scored 30 goals for England under Southgate — in the national side's history, only Gary Lineker scored more under a single manager, with 35 under Bobby Robson.

### Pickford delivers

Jordan Pickford has not been especially busy at Euro 2020 behind an England defense that has been watertight so far but when called upon he has delivered the goods. The Everton goalkeeper was one of England's heroes during an unexpected run to the semi-finals at the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

England's number one, who has made a number of high-profile errors at club level in recent years, divides opinion among fans but he has repaid Southgate's faith in him. Pickford was forced into his first meaningful save just after the half-hour at Wembley, smothering a Timo Werner shot at close range and making another fine stop as he tipped a Kai Havertz pile-driver over his crossbar early in the second half.

### Toothless Germany

Germany's performance against England was summed up by one moment late in the game when Thomas Mueller was through on goal with a chance to equalize. But the Bayern Munich man dragged it wide to the immense relief of the crowd of 40,000 fans inside Wembley.

However, a red card for Marcus Danielson nine minutes into extra time left Sweden hanging on for penalties until Dovbyk latched onto Zinchenko's inviting cross to spark wild scenes of celebration among the small band of Ukrainian fans at Hampden Park.

"With this performance and commitment, our team has deserved the love of the whole country," said Shevchenko, who in the last eight will return to Italy where he enjoyed the best years of his stellar playing career with AC Milan. Shevchenko said before the game his side had already achieved their objective by making it through the group. But the former Ballon d'Or winner got the reaction he desired after a disappointing 1-0 defeat to Austria in their final group game with a fast start.

Andriy Yarmolenko has been his country's driving force all tournament, scoring or assisting in all but two of their six goals. The West Ham United winger's teasing cross with the outside of his left foot fell kindly for Zinchenko on 27 minutes and the



**LONDON:** Germany's coach Joachim Loew reacts during the Euro 2020 round of 16 football match between England and Germany at Wembley Stadium in London on Tuesday. —AFP

Goretzka "will take a big step forward in the next two or three years and be at the peak in 2024" when Germany hosts the next European Championship.

Yet Flick is expected to take a team to the next World Cup that will at the very least be competitive. A convincing win in the qualifier against minnows Liechtenstein in his first game on September 2 would be a good start. —AFP



**LONDON:** England's forward Raheem Sterling celebrates after scoring the opening goal during the Euro 2020 round of 16 football match between England and Germany at Wembley Stadium in London on Tuesday. —AFP

The visitors had started well, putting early pressure on England, with Werner and Havertz looking dangerous against a side struggling to adjust to a new formation. But as the match wore on Joachim Loew's men ran out of ideas and despite the late, clear chance for Mueller, they rarely looked like scoring.

For Germany manager Loew, it was a disappointing end to his reign, which hit its high point when Germany won the 2014 World Cup. The defeat also raises searching questions for Germany as they ponder a new direction under incoming coach Hansi Flick. —AFP



**GLASGOW:** Ukraine's forward Artem Dovbyk (right) celebrates after scoring his team's second goal during the Euro 2020 round of 16 football match between Sweden and Ukraine at Hampden Park in Glasgow on Tuesday. —AFP

Manchester City man drilled in a low shot that had too much power for Olsen. —AFP

## England fans urged not to fly to Rome for quarter-final

**LONDON:** England fans have been urged not to travel to Rome for their side's Euro 2020 quarter-final against Ukraine on Saturday as coronavirus restrictions mean even those with tickets cannot use them. Tuesday's 2-0 win over Germany at a raucous Wembley propelled Gareth Southgate's men into the last eight of the COVID-delayed European Championship.

But Italian health regulations mean supporters travelling from Britain would face five days of quarantine and therefore they would miss the match. It means England face taking to the pitch without the vocal backing of their fans, who have only recently been allowed to return to Wembley as COVID-19 restrictions have been eased. England's governing Football Association was entitled to a ticket allocation of 2,560, equating to 16 percent of the permitted capacity of 16,000 at Rome's Stadio Olimpico. But instead the tickets will go on general sale for what will be England's only game of the tournament away from Wembley.

The FA said it was working with European football's governing body UEFA and the British embassy in Rome to "facilitate" ticket sales to England fans resident in Italy. British government advice is that fans should not travel to Italy, an "amber list" country requiring 10 days of self-isolation upon return. Britain is experiencing a surge in new coronavirus cases blamed on the Delta variant that was first detected in India, despite a successful vaccination drive. —AFP

## Loew seeks to clear air with Ozil over 2018 Germany exit

**HERZOGENAURACH:** Outgoing Germany coach Joachim Loew wants clear-the-air talks with Mesut Ozil in a fresh attempt to bury the hatchet with the midfielder, who quit international football in 2018 amid accusations of racism.

Following Germany's 2-0 defeat to England at Wembley in the last 16 of Euro 2020 on Tuesday, Loew is stepping down after 15 years in charge of the national side. However, Ozil's shock decision to quit the German team in the wake of their humiliating group-stage exit at the 2018 World Cup remains a "huge personal disappointment" for Loew.

"The time will come when we will talk or meet again, to talk things over and put everything aside," Loew said Wednesday at Germany's Euro 2020 base in Bavaria. Ozil, a German of Turkish decent, complained of being subjected to "racism" and quit the national team in anger following Germany's miserable display in Russia.

His place in the team was the subject of fierce debate during the tournament, after which he penned an explosive resignation letter accusing the German Football Association of structural racism. He said fans regarded him as "German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose." Loew's previous attempt to speak with Ozil in September 2018, when the midfielder was still at Arsenal, was reportedly blocked by the Premier League club. When he signed for Turkish side Fenerbahce in January, the 32-year-old Ozil flatly ruled out ever adding to his 92 appearances for Germany. —AFP



## England keep Euro 2020 dream alive

### Belgium vs Italy, Switzerland vs Spain kick off quarter-final tomorrow

**PARIS:** England's defeat of Germany sent a nation's expectations of silverware after a 55-year wait skyrocketing as Gareth Southgate's side joined heavyweights Spain, Italy and Belgium in the Euro 2020 quarter-finals.

England's cathartic last-16 win over the Germans at raucous Wembley on Tuesday was a landmark moment after decades of misery at the hands of the four-time world champions. Raheem Sterling and Harry Kane supplied the goals to set up a quarter-final against Ukraine in Rome on Saturday with England hunting their first major international trophy since the 1966 World Cup.

Ukraine punched their last-eight ticket with a 2-1 extra-time defeat of Sweden in Glasgow thanks to a 121st-minute winner from Artem Dovbyk. Switzerland and Spain get the quarter-final action underway in Saint Petersburg on Friday followed by Belgium's show-down with Italy in Munich. The Czech Republic play Denmark in the other tie on Saturday in Baku.

With old nemesis Germany—who knocked them out of the 1970, 1990 and 2010 World Cups and beat them in the Euro 96 semi-finals—finally vanquished, Southgate is urging England to seize a golden opportunity.

"It didn't really need me to say it but when we got in the dressing room, we were talking about Saturday already," Southgate said. "It was an immense performance but at a cost, emotionally and physically, and we've got to make sure that we recover well and that mentally we're in the right space."

A peak audience of 20.6 million people

watched England's victory over Germany, the BBC said. The draw is opening up invitingly for England, who will be favored to beat Ukraine who have won only one of their seven meetings. If England reach the semi-finals, they would face Denmark or the Czech Republic in front of another partisan crowd at Wembley.

As the elusive continental crown moves tantalizingly closer Southgate warned: "It's a dangerous moment for us. We'll have that warmth of success and the feeling around the country that we've only got to turn up to win the thing. "We know it's going to be an immense challenge from here on. I think the players know that."

**'Hurts like hell'**

For Germany, who have won the European Championship three times in their illustrious history, defeat signaled a bitter end to Joachim Loew's 15-year reign as Germany coach. Germany won the 2014 World Cup but crashed out at the group stage four years later in Russia and have now made their earliest exit at a European Championship since 2004.

"The players are gutted. It's very quiet in the dressing room," said the 61-year-old. "In games like this, it is crucial to convert all goal chances, which we didn't do, neither through Timo Werner nor Thomas Mueller."

Mueller said his crucial miss for a late equalizer "hurts like hell". England, who themselves looked short of inspiration for much of the contest, finally broke the deadlock when Luke Shaw crossed for Sterling to finish from close range, notching his third goal of the competition.



**LONDON:** England fans cheer before the UEFA Euro 2020 round of 16 football match between England and Germany at Wembley Stadium in London on Tuesday. — AFP

ing his third goal of the competition.

Mueller should have equalized when Kai Havertz's pass sent him clean through, but the Bayern Munich star rolled his shot wide and fell to the turf in dismay. Kane made Germany pay in the 86th minute as he finished off a lethal England counter-attack with a diving header past Manuel Neuer from substitute Jack Grealish's cross.

That was the first goal of the tournament for the Tottenham man, who has been a shadow of the player who won the Golden Boot at the 2018 World Cup in Russia. Ukraine are waiting for them in Rome hopefully not suffering any hang-over from their late night in Glasgow.

Oleksandr Zinchenko put Ukraine ahead at Hampden but Emil Forsberg equalized for Sweden before the break with his fourth goal in three games. Serhiy Sydorchuk hit the post for Ukraine in the second half while Forsberg twice struck the woodwork, but the dismissal of Marcus Danielson gave Ukraine the initiative late on.

The Sweden center-back was sent off on 98 minutes when his studs caught Artem Besedin's knee with his follow-through, a yellow card changed to red after a VAR review. As penalties loomed, Dovbyk stooped to head in a Zinchenko cross and snatch victory for Ukraine. — AFP






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